APRIL

HARPER'S MAGAZINE

1919

Solving the Problem of the Arctic

Stefansson's Exclusive Narrative of His Five Years in the Arctic begins in this Number

What Won the War

By GENERAL MALLETERRE

The Chemists of the Future

By ELLWOOD HENDRICK

Unusual Short Stories and Articles

THIRTY-FIVE CENTS

Stories from Late Victorian Magazines, Part 2

1. The Heart of the House by Mary Heaton Vorse – *Everybody's Magazine* December 1906
2. The Shell of Sense by Olivia Howard Dunbar – *Harper's Magazine* December 1908
3. The House Surgeon by Rudyard Kipling – *Harper's Magazine* September to October 1909
4. The Sycamore by Olivia Howard Dunbar – *Harper's Magazine* July 1910
5. The Intercessor by May Sinclair – *The English Review* July 1911
6. The Clocks by H. S. Walpole – *The Fortnightly Review* October 1, 1913
7. The Long Chamber by Olivia Howard Dunbar – *Harper's Magazine* October 1914
8. The Coming of the Terror by Arthur Machen – *The Century* October 1917
9. The Flying Teuton by Alice Brown – *Harper's Magazine* August 1917
10. The Pavilion of St. Merci by Mary Heaton Vorse - *The Forum* December 1917
11. The Woman at Seven Brothers by Wilbur Daniel Steele – *Harper's Magazine* December 1917
12. Master of Fallen Years by Vincent O'Sullivan – *The Smart Set* August 1917
13. The Immortal Curse by J.-H. Rosny, Ainé - *The Best French Short Stories of 1923/24* 1924



And he would say in a great, deep voice—"My great big Mother—

—"The Heart of the Home."

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EVERYBODY'S MAGAZINE

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The Heart of the House

By MARY HEATON VORSE

Illustrations by Blanche Greer

WHEN Eden came home from a visit and asked for his mother, they told him that she had gone away—they weren't the sort that try to make excuses about heaven and angels, and it was better so. He took it as a matter of course, for a wise child doesn't question fate as we foolishly learn to question it later on.

He didn't understand why his father held him so close, kissing him in a way that frightened him and made him want to cry too. So he struggled away and went over to where his aunt sat swallowing down her tears (you couldn't fool him; he knew that when you cry inside it's just as much crying as when you cry outside, only you needn't be so much ashamed), and asked her:

"Where does it hurt you?" Then he climbed upon her knees. "Does it hurt you here?" he asked, touching her head, "or here?" and he touched her throat. "Nor your tummy?—a little bit your tummy?" But instead of telling him where it hurt, his aunt swallowed down her tears as hard as ever, and one or two would even have got outside if she hadn't dabbed at them cleverly with her handkerchief. So Eden was really alarmed about the state of her health, and begged anxiously:

"Let me see your tongue." Then his aunt hugged him tight in the same scary way his father had, and though she didn't laugh, Eden saw that he had done something clever and felt as proud of it as if he knew what it was. But if a thing is clever once, any child knows that it's just twice as clever the second time; so he got down from his aunt's lap, and went over to his father and asked to see his tongue too. And just as he had known they would, they found him twice as clever, and he strutted out of the room meaning to go and find his mother and ask to see her tongue. Then he remembered that she had gone away on a visit, so he strolled into the kitchen; and at the sight of him Norah burst out sobbing. She didn't politely try to swallow her tears at all.

"Ain't he the living image of his ma?"

Now, Norah had often said that before. Indeed, that he looked like his mother was one of the things that people always said to him, but no one had ever cried about it before. You can imagine that all these tears, together

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with his mother's absence, had darkened his home-coming; and he wandered forlornly upstairs again.

He had a feeling that the house had changed a great deal since he left it. Then it had been dark, and there was no need of people hushing him and telling him to walk quietly, for who would want to run and make a noise in an unnatural place that was darker at noon than after the lamps were lighted? Eden had hated the thin streaks of sunlight, like long, white fingers, that pushed their way in through the cracks of the blinds, as if the sun were trying in spite of everybody to sneak in; they made the house look still more unnatural.

Now windows and doors stood open wide, there were flowers everywhere, and yet there was a disturbing, put-away, cleaned-up look to everything—the way your room looks after sweeping day (it takes, as you know, a long time for your room to get a lived-in feeling after a severe cleaning; it is as if part of yourself had been swept out with the dirt). Nevertheless it seemed good to Eden to have the house open, as it had been before his mother was sick, and he almost expected that she would run to the top of the stairs to meet him, calling: "Lovely Eden!"

Then he would answer, "Lovely mother!"

And she would say, "Darling Eden!"

And he, "Darling mother!"

Then it would be her turn: "Sweetie Eden!"

And of course he would answer, "Sweetie mother."

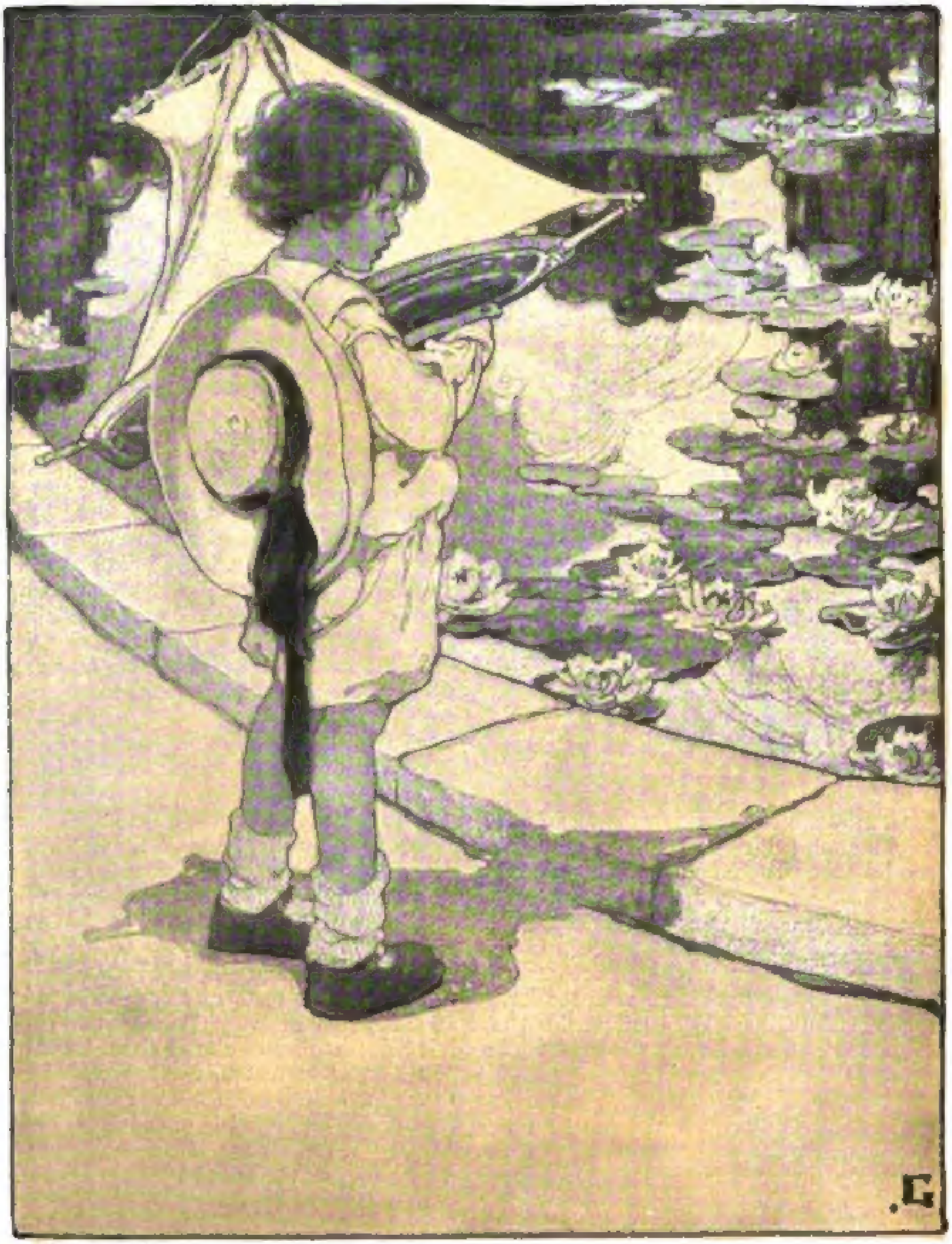
By that time they would both be laughing, and she would growl in a great, big voice, "My great, big Eden."

And he would say in a great, deep voice, "My great, big mother," and so it would go on, one name after another, dear, lovely little names, foolish names that nobody but a mother would think of calling any one. It was, you can see, a very silly game, and if Eden had been more than a little over four he would have seen how silly it was, and wouldn't have played it any more, in spite of his mother. Somehow mothers are glad to keep on the silly old games; they never grow up. But Eden, as I say, was very little; he hadn't even learned to be ashamed of kissing, and now he wanted dreadfully to hear his mother say "Lovely Eden."

His mouth was all ready to answer "Lovely mother," and he would, no doubt, have run up to her and hugged her knees and buried his face in her skirts, which was what he liked to do. He didn't exactly know in words what he wanted, as you or I would know; he felt a tugging inside him and a queer, empty place, which, he knew, he must presently fill with tears. He didn't know in words, either, what made the house so different, as if it were ready for his mother to come and play; and he didn't know what it was that had frightened him so before, when the house had been all dark but for the long, greedy fingers that the sun kept poking in. But what frightened him now was the stillness; it slid up his legs in a cold shiver, it laid its heavy hand on his little shoulders, it made him glance fearfully behind him, to see if it weren't by chance following him. For there wasn't a sound in the whole great house except the tickings of the clocks and the outside noises that came in through the window. Now, a house has a great many noises of its own, and it ought to have. There should be the noise of people talking, the noise of Maggie and Norah at work, a little laughter, the rustling of papers, the occasional ringing of the front-door bell; but now everything was quiet, and Eden was afraid. You see, the heart of the house had stopped; it was for the time quite dead, and Eden couldn't know that the house was waiting for him to be its heart and start all the cheerful noises going again.

He drifted miserably into his mother's room; it looked as he hadn't seen it look for a long time; and it hadn't nearly as much of the dreadfully put-away feeling as the rest of the house. His mother's work and her work-basket were on the table, and her needle and thimble, as if she had been using them. It was a dear work-basket; Eden got all its empty spools for his very own, and was even allowed to play with the full ones; but as for the pins and scissors—well, about them, his mother had always been as unreasonable as Maggie.

The desk was open, and there was a book upside down on a little wicker table, and a favorite pair of slippers peeped out from under the bed. It almost looked as if his mother had only just gone out of the room, and would be back in a moment. Eden didn't know that between that *almost* and the way it had looked when his mother was really there, there was all the difference between life and death, but he felt it. It was as though the air of the room were full of the tears his aunt had shed when, for his sake,



Eden might go anywhere except to the pond — but this was very hard to remember.

she arranged the room, for then she hadn't even made a pretense of being brave and swallowing her tears; she had let them go sliding down her cheeks as they would. So the silence and the tears and everything all together overcame him, and he threw himself into his mother's chair and wept.

It was then that the first wonderful thing happened. He had cried only a moment—and, mind you, he had begun with the idea of crying a long time, for he was lonely and frightened, and, after all, only a little past four—well, he had just begun to cry when there came over him the most unaccountable comforted feeling. He stopped crying and looked up, and, though he didn't know it, it was his mother he expected to see, and the strange part of it was that he felt as happy as if she had been there, though nobody was in the room.

Eden wasn't lonely any more nor frightened; how he felt I can't explain any better than by saying that he felt comforted all through. It was then that he smiled for the first time, a dear, funny little smile, as if he had a nice secret that he was just on the point of telling—as if it were too nice to keep, and still so nice that he couldn't let it go. For the saddest part about a secret is that you can't tell it and have it a secret. You give it to the person you tell it to, and he keeps it until he gives it away to some one, and it gets littler every time it's given, until by and by there's nothing left of it at all. Well, Eden sat there smiling for a long time, two minutes, perhaps, feeling happy all the while, and then his eyes happened to light on a basket of toys over in the corner, the toys that were always kept in his mother's room, but that had been taken away when the place got so queer and so dark. At the sight of them Eden gave a shout of recognition, and soon he was pushing the little iron cars across the room, saying:

"Choog-choof-choof! Too-too!" For he was very proud of the natural steam-car noise he could make; and at the sound of his cheerful playing, all the little noises that had been scared away by the silence of the house came out of their hiding-places. Norah in the kitchen heard him through the open window, and before she knew it she was crooning over her work; Maggie remembered something to be done up-stairs and actually ran up the steps; then Eden's aunt came from her room where she had been crying, and his father from his where he had been looking straight ahead of him at nothing, and they opened Eden's door and looked in. And Eden's aunt felt comforted because she had thought of the basket of toys; every one, indeed, felt better, for Eden had set the heart of the house beating again.

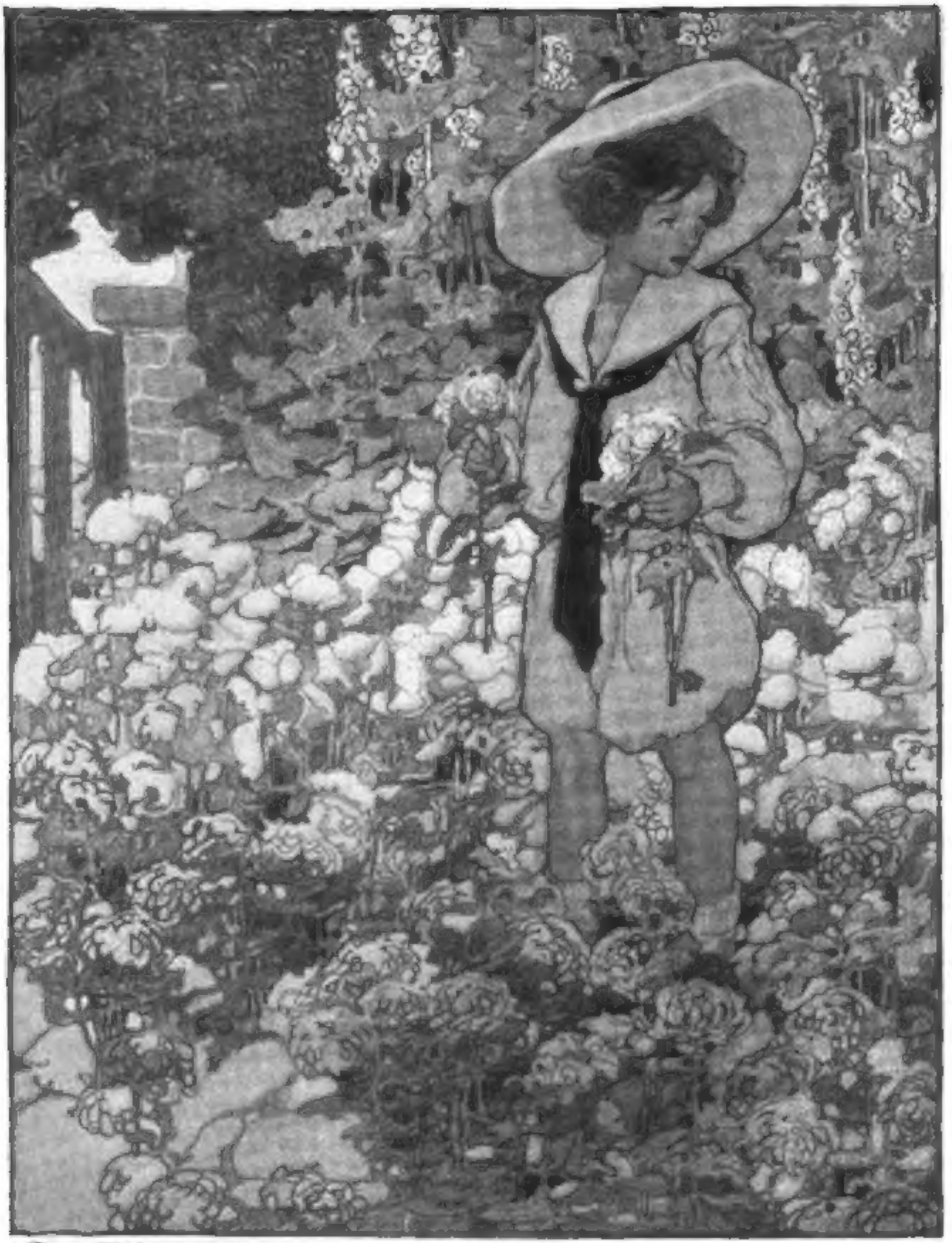
II

HE had always been what Norah and Maggie called "an old-fashioned child," and now he grew more old-fashioned than ever. It was, his aunt thought, as though he realized what had happened, and were trying to be good to make up to them a little. For instance, he no longer waked up in the night and cried for a light; he didn't make people walk through the dark hall with him any more; but though they didn't know it, this wasn't because he was trying to be good; it was because he had forgotten that he had ever been afraid of the dark. When he went into it, instead of its seeming big and lonely and full of uncanny animals, he felt as if he were going into a warm, cozy room. He never had a more taken-care-of feeling than when he woke up at night; and instead of covering his hand up tight, for fear that if he left it out a wolf would come from under the bed and get a nip at it, he slept now with one little hand hanging conveniently out of bed, for he had sometimes a comforting feeling, just before he went to sleep, of another kind hand holding his. And the reason, again, that he was so good when he woke up in the morning was the memory of his happy dreams, though he never remembered them in words.

It would be hard to tell just when he realized that his mother wasn't coming back at all. From the very first, something had told him that he mustn't ask his aunt and his father about it; that this wasn't one of the times when you could ask if she was coming this afternoon. "Well, then, to-morrow? To-morrow night, late? When?"

So his father was not right when he looked sadly at Eden and said to Eden's aunt, "How soon they forget!"

It may have been that Eden realized what it all meant one day when the washerwoman kissed him, exclaiming, "Poor motherless lamb!" and Maggie hissed at her, "Whist! Will ye be quiet!" If he did understand, he didn't show it; but he smiled at them both his mysterious little smile as if he were on the point of telling his dear secret, and that



She was there — just as he was there — only in a different way . . .

made Maggie kiss him and say, "Ain't he the darlin'!"

But the reason Eden smiled was that just as the washerwoman called him a "poor motherless lamb," there came over him the taken-care-of feeling. It had never come before when there had been any one else with him. That was why he liked to go off by himself, for he never felt lonely except when he was with other people.

By and by his father and his aunt began to talk a great deal to him about his mother. They told him how lovely and good she had always been, and how dearly she had loved him, and Eden got lonelier and lonelier every minute and he felt as though his heart would burst if he couldn't get out to the garden where he knew the taken-care-of feeling was waiting for him.

His father's eyes grew kind and he said to Eden's aunt, "He does remember. Poor little chap."

But Eden wasn't crying because he remembered; he was crying because they seemed to be taking something from him, when they talked so of his mother.

When his father followed him into the garden to comfort him, he found Eden playing by himself and singing a song without any beginning or any end, the kind of song you make up yourself and sing only when you think no one is around. But Eden had the sociable air of a boy who wasn't playing by himself at all.

Both his father and his aunt noticed that when they talked about his mother he grew restless, and his eyes pleaded with them, as if he were trying to say "Please stop." They put it down to his great sensibility, though they didn't really understand how it could be that, for when they would say to him, "Do you remember this?" or "Do you remember that?" he would shake his head and look very embarrassed and a little ashamed. For he knew well enough that he was disappointing them, and not being the clever boy that he liked to be; but a long time had gone by and he didn't remember much about his mother to put into words. The kind of things he remembered were not the sort anybody ever talked about, and so he, naturally, little as he was, couldn't know how to say them. He remembered how comfortable her lap was, and the way she had of putting her cheek against his, and the touch of her hands, and more than anything else the glad, safe feeling one had when one was with her, and how she smiled and cried "Eden, Eden!" when he came into the room, so that he felt himself a very fine fellow just to have come in at all. You see all those things were so much a part of him that he didn't really know about them any more than he knew why one is happier when it is a nice day. And he missed them all most whenever they talked about her, which they did more and more often; for his father said:

"It's after all the only thing we can do for him, not to let him forget her."

He always listened to what they said, though it made him feel confused and uncomfortable, because, as he discovered presently, they were talking about a different person from the mother he remembered—and yet older people knew everything, and since they said it was his mother, that must be so, for of course no one can have two mothers.

After a time, Eden got so he could tell when they had been talking about her as soon as he came into the room, for it had a cold feeling to him, somewhat the feeling that the dark used to have. Perhaps it was that his father always looked so sad and lonely at those times; at any rate, Eden was always in a hurry to escape out of doors or to his mother's room, and he would scurry away as if he were running from the dark. For another wonderful thing had happened to Eden.

He had only to go by himself, and the most delightful ideas for games would come to him. He knew well enough that he didn't make them up himself, for they popped out of his head just as unexpectedly as ever a toy popped out of his father's pocket. He felt toward these games very much as he did toward the toys—as if some one had given them to him. And this wasn't all; at night when he was going to sleep, stories would tell themselves to him; he didn't have the trouble of thinking them up.

So you see what a happy little boy Eden was, though Maggie often shook her head and said:

"It scalds me heart! There he's nobody to play wid him, an' him alone the livelong day."

When Eden was nearly six, something happened that no one has ever been able to account for. His house was away from the village and stood quite alone on a hill, for his father and mother had loved each other so much that they hadn't cared whether they had neighbors or not.

You could see away for miles and miles,

and in the distance were humpy hills, which looked like processions of blue camels walking along the edge of the sky, Eden thought, and there was a curly silver river, and fields brown and green and red. Near the house were terraces, which led down to the rose garden, and beyond that were woods with big trees, and a pond with lilies; and Eden might go anywhere except to the pond. It was very hard to remember that one mightn't go to the pond. So one day when he had forgotten, his aunt talked to him about his mother and how good she had always been, and said that because Eden looked like her he must try to be like her. She ended with:

"It would grieve your mother very much if you were not an obedient boy."

And then the thing happened that neither of them ever understood. He was not a little boy who had bad tempers; the worst of him was, he forgot the things that he was told to do, and he would smile in an ashamed, puzzled little way when taxed with his fault, as if he had really forgotten for good and all or else had never heard.

"Didn't I know he was the smart one, I'd think he was a wee bit innocent," Maggie said.

So you see what an amazing thing it was that at his aunt's words he flew into a dreadful rage.

"I don't want to be like her, I don't want to be told!" he screamed. "I hate her! I'm not her little boy! I'm not her little boy!" It seemed to him that beside his aunt there was in the room a calm, white woman. He knew, all the time, that he was saying a dreadful thing, and that no one would ever love a boy who could act in that way, and his head knew all the time that he was talking nonsense. For like it or not, you are your mother's little boy forever and ever.

He was so angry that his aunt was frightened; she never punished him—she was too gentle to punish any one—but she went out of the room, and the calm, shadowy woman went with her. Frightened at himself and miserably feeling that no one would ever forgive him, Eden ran out to the garden.

When he came back his face had the smiling look it wore when the game had gone very well, for Eden was, I think, gayer than most boys. There was a gladness about him that made tears almost come to one's eyes, and now it fairly shone out of him, for while he was out in the garden he had found that only the outside of him had been wicked and that it didn't matter, strange as it seemed, whether he said he didn't like the mother his aunt had talked about or not.

III

AFTER this, the calm white woman was always in the house. Eden didn't mind her, for though he guessed that she was the mother his aunt and his father talked about, he knew that she hadn't anything to do with him. She didn't seem even to realize that he was there. He knew that he might have gone up to her and said "Boo," and that she wouldn't have winked. Indeed she seldom stayed long after Eden came into a room. Usually he forgot about her, and when next he looked up she would be gone. It was she, he guessed, who had made the room feel cold and dark, but since he could see her, he wasn't afraid any more. She was rather beautiful in a cold, tiresome sort of way, but she didn't know how to look with kind eyes at a boy, and as for her having a soft lap or calling "Eden"—that would have been impossible. So after he had looked her over curiously for a while, Eden thought no more about her. He treated her just as he might have treated a grown-up who wasn't interested in boys—the kind that made him feel little and never like a fine fellow.

He noticed two things, however: that his father and his aunt were very fond of her, and that though they were fond of her, they couldn't see her.

Meantime the games in the garden went better and better, and it was exactly as if he had some one to play with. Especially when he was very happy, he could hear inside himself some one else laughing, and Eden would try and try to think whom he had ever heard laughing like that. For a long time he had lived on the edge of a new, wonderful happening, and when at last it came, it came in the most natural way in the world, as wonderful things always do.

One morning when Maggie was dressing him, he found himself saying, "She's coming to-day."

"Who's that that's comin', darlin'?" asked Maggie. She was soaping his neck and the part behind his ears that even a boy as old as past six can't do himself.

"Who's comin'?" asked Maggie.

"I don't know," Eden had to confess. He knew he'd been silly and that his head hadn't said those words at all; they had just slipped out, and though before they had said themselves they had seemed to have some sense, now they didn't mean anything at all.

"I don't know," he said again.

"Well, if you ain't the quare one," said Maggie, rubbing his brown neck until bits of white foam flew; and he caught some on his finger and dabbed it on his nose, and then wiggled his nose up and down, and both of them laughed. So Eden knew he had made up for the silly thing he had said.

Then he went out into the morning and ran down his favorite path, with his heart beating hard, because he felt so glad; and his aunt, who watched him from the terrace, thought to herself:

"He runs as if he were going to meet some one."

And the wonderful thing about it was that Eden was running to meet some one, and the deep-down part of him knew it, though his head didn't; so that is why it didn't seem strange at all when he saw her walking toward him along the path. He wasn't surprised or frightened. He ran toward her, calling:

"Dear, dear," and she answered, "Oh, Eden!" and then what happened Eden never could have told you, for he hadn't any words for it. Nor could he have said what she looked like, for try as he might he could never see her face when he shut his eyes, as he could see his aunt's or his father's. He could only feel how she looked. In the same way, he could only remember that, after she said "Eden" to him, he felt the same sort of gladness that he had felt when he hid his face in his mother's skirts and hugged her knees. But you mustn't think they behaved as if they hadn't met for a long time. It was only saying good morning in the right sort of way.

You can imagine that a boy like Eden and any one with the kind, gay face of his friend wouldn't waste time as grown-up people do; they went right to playing, and she had even more fascinating games for him now than those she had sent him—for Eden realized now where his games came from—and though she was a grown-up she could play better than he.

They were having such a good time that it was a long while before Eden noticed an interesting thing that made him feel quite puffed up with pride; and this was that, though they had been talking right along, they didn't use any words. Eden knew that this kind of talk was a very fine thing to know how to do, and he stuck out his chest like one of his own pigeons, as he thought, "Auntie couldn't do that."

His friend laughed at him again, and there were tears in her eyes, she was so happy.

The next day he noticed another interesting thing, and this was that she had lost her shadow. Now Eden could run fast, but his shadow ran as fast as he, and at night it grew and grew so that in the old days it had used to frighten him. Especially in the dark it had been a fearsome thing, for he knew that it must be near him all the time, because as soon as they brought in a light, there it would be larger than ever; and it's the things you can't see but know are there, that you are afraid of.

"What did you do to lose your shadow?" he asked her.

But she smiled at him a young, little smile very much like his own.

"I wish I could lose mine," Eden went on. "They're no good."

At that she gasped a little and put her hands to her heart. Eden wondered whom he had seen do that.

"Dear," she said, "you will keep your shadow a long time yet. Shadows are kind and good. It's your shadow, you see, that holds you down to the earth. You couldn't stay here if you didn't have your shadow."

Eden was glad that there was some use in a shadow, and he looked at his with more respect. His aunt had told him some confusing things about the sun making shadows. He had seen through that, though he had been too polite to say so; although Eden wasn't very old, he was old enough to know how grown people wriggle out of answering your questions. No matter where he and his aunt started, they generally ended that he must be a good little boy.

He saw at once how reasonable was the idea that your shadow holds you down to the ground, and now that he thought of it, he couldn't remember ever seeing a flying bird with a shadow.

"But you're here without your shadow," he objected.

"I came back to find something," she smiled at him. "It was a long way to come. I thought I could never find my way back."

"And how did you find it?" Eden asked.

"I heard you crying," she answered him,

and a funny lump came in his throat, and for a moment neither of them spoke.

"Why didn't you come back before?" It was out now, what he'd been waiting to ask from the first minute.

"I did come back. I'm only a little more here than I have been all the time." Then Eden knew what he'd suspected; that it was she who warmed the dark up for him, and who made him feel so comforted.

He knew, of course, that she was different from the others, a thousand times dearer and sweeter, but different, so he never spoke about her to any one. You don't have to be very old to know that one doesn't talk about the things one feels gladdest or saddest about. And it made Eden so happy to be with her that he couldn't have talked about her, even if he hadn't been afraid that they would laugh at him if he said:

"There's a lady in the garden who has lost her shadow." He knew that would sound silly if he said it out loud—he knew the queer things grown people laugh about. That was one of the most confusing things about them—the way they laughed always in the wrong places. Then, too, they would be sure to ask him where she came from. How could he make them understand that she wasn't the kind that came from places? For she hadn't come from anywhere, neither was she going anywhere. She was there, that was all, just as he was there, only in a different way.

She was in the house too. He could hear her laugh and catch glimpses of her; she was all over the house, and when he played indoors she played with him. He wondered why it was that his aunt didn't say something about her. Very soon he found out why. It was because his aunt couldn't see her. Once his aunt came upon them so quietly that Eden hadn't heard her come; they were talking together in the delightful way that didn't need any words, when he heard his aunt close behind him. She bent over him and kissed him.

"How nicely you play by yourself," she said. "Are you having a good time?"

Eden almost answered, "But I'm not playing by myself." He looked from his friend to his aunt and back again; and he saw that his aunt couldn't see her, while she, with her kind look that dropped peace into one's heart, was looking at his aunt. The sadness went out of his aunt's face; then she sighed:

"I can't believe sometimes that she's gone."

And Eden had hard work not to cry out, "But she's not gone, she's here!" But something kept his mouth closed, and he sat there with a toy in his hand, smiling his quaint little smile.

This incident gave him a great many questions to ask of his friend.

"Do you know auntie?" was the first one.

"I did long ago," his friend answered, and she sighed. "I thought she had forgotten me."

"Why," he asked next, "don't you ever come into the room when my father's there? Why don't you come where my aunt is?"

At that she wrung her hands and said:

"I don't know. I can't tell you. They don't let me."

Now Eden hadn't asked why it was that his aunt couldn't see her when he could, for that, somehow, seemed natural enough; but he didn't understand how they could keep her out when they couldn't see her, and he said so.

But there was a look on her face that made Eden say, "Don't cry," and she answered so faintly that he could hardly hear the words:

"They've forgotten me!"

Then Eden comforted her and coaxed her, just how he couldn't tell, and soon she looked at him in her glad way that made him feel warm all through.

It all gave him a great deal to think of, and when he went to find her in the garden next day he had his little explanation ready.

"You see," he told her, "they are so busy remembering about my mother that I suppose they haven't time to remember you."

She repeated after him: "They talk about your mother?"

"Yes," he said, "all the time. My mother," he explained proudly, "is dead." For although it is, of course, a very sad thing to have your mother die, it has its compensations, if you were only a very little boy when it happened. Having your mother dead makes ladies give you extra large pieces of cake when your aunt takes you to call on them, and makes everybody specially nice to you. So little by little, Eden had grown rather proud of having his mother dead. He began to behave about it as if it were something clever he had done himself.

He went on in a rather important tone: "She was very good, but not like you a bit. I don't think you'd like her."

"You don't think I'd like her?" she asked,

and there was a look in her eyes that Eden had never seen there before.

"No," he said, "you're not a bit alike, and *I* don't like her at all."

She gave a queer little gasp of an "Oh!" and put her hand to her heart again.

"Why, dear, don't you like your mother? And how do you know we're not alike? Do you remember her?" It was her turn for questions.

"Before she died, you mean?" Eden asked. "No. I used to, but I don't any more."

"Then how do you know what she's like?" she pressed him.

That was an easy one.

"Oh, I've heard them talking so much that I know just what she's like."

"They like her, then?" she asked, and Eden knew that something was hurting her very much, though he couldn't think what it could be.

"Oh, they like her more than anything," and to comfort her he came close to her. "But I love you lots the most," he said. "I never have liked her. She makes the room cold, and she doesn't like me." He let slip out what he hadn't meant to tell, that he had seen his mother. He wanted, you see, to justify himself, for he knew that every right-minded person would be shocked at the idea of his not liking his mother, and he looked at his friend anxiously to see what she thought of him. But she didn't seem shocked. He knew she wasn't even thinking of him at all.

"I never understood," she moaned to herself. "I never understood." Then she cried out, "Oh, poor, poor people!" Eden waited patiently until she should get back to him again. This she did suddenly, with:

"How do you know she doesn't like you?"

"I can tell by the way she acts," Eden confessed, his finger in his mouth, much afraid of being called silly, for he knew that his mother wasn't really there, not as his father and his aunt were.

But his friend didn't think he was silly, and the tone in which she asked, "Do you mean you see her as you see me?" almost frightened him. She seemed quite a different person from the one he had known all along; sad and angry and hurt. Eden faltered out:

"Yes, I see her, but generally she goes out when I come in."

"What does she look like?" his friend asked eagerly.

"She's very beautiful, they say, and very, very good. She gets grieved when I'm bad, auntie says, but I don't think she cares what I do. They can't see her," he added proudly, for now that she didn't think he was silly to see people that weren't there, he thought himself clever to see things his aunt and his father couldn't.

"Could you see her?" he asked.

"I *must* see her," she answered seriously. "I must try and try till I see her. I thought they had forgotten. I couldn't know they'd forget this way."

"You don't think it's bad for me not to like my mother very much?" he questioned.

A great many wonderful things had happened to Eden without his being surprised—for nobody had told him they were wonderful, so of course he couldn't be expected to know—but what happened now did surprise him, for with her sweet face full of anger she cried to him:

"She's not your mother! Don't believe them! She's not your mother!" Then she called in such a dear, appealing way, "Eden, Eden!" that Eden's heart almost burst, for he knew there was something she wanted him to say to her, and he didn't know what it could be. All he could do was to whisper "Dear, dear," in his soft, little voice, and again she cried to him, with a very anguish of appeal, "Darling Eden!" and all he could answer was "Darling," and when he saw how sad she looked, and how all the gladness was gone from her eyes, he almost sobbed himself, as he said:

"Please don't cry! You mustn't cry!" He felt so sorry for her that he spent the next few minutes swallowing his tears, while she sat there pale and silent beside him. It seemed to Eden that though she was beside him she was a long way off, as grown-up people so often are, when they are thinking about the unsociable things that a little boy can't understand. He brought her back to him with:

"Who is my mother, if she isn't?" For though he felt inside him that somehow she knew more about things than his father and his aunt did, yet he was used, on the other hand, to believing that his father and his aunt knew everything, as is very proper for a little boy to believe.

"And if she's not my mother, who is she?" he asked quite triumphantly.

At this his friend sprang to her feet, and her face was full of anger and jealousy.

"She's not anybody," she cried. "She's stolen your mother's place. She's made them

forget your mother. She's not real. She isn't any one."

There are moments when the simplicity of children makes them wise, and Eden was wise when he answered.

"They think she's real, 'cause they talk about her."

She wrung her hands in her pain.

"They've made her real," she cried. "If I'd only known before!"

Presently as Eden started slowly for the house, she called after him, "My Eden," and though her voice was low and soft, the way she said it quivered all through him, and for the next few days when he didn't see her he tried and tried to think who it was that had ever said to him "My Eden" in just that way.

If he didn't see her, he felt her in the house more than ever before. He felt her in the room even where his father and his aunt sat, and he realized vaguely that something strange was happening, something that he couldn't at all understand. So he stayed out in the garden as much as he could, though it was lonely without her. He wondered if she had seen the calm, white-faced woman he had thought was his mother, and presently he remembered that he hadn't seen her himself since the day he and his friend had talked about her in the garden. And, indeed, since then the white woman had seemed less real, and Eden found himself wondering if he had really seen her after all.

That there was something unusual going on under the calm surface of things every one felt.

"I don't know what ails me, but I feel as if some one was comin'," Maggie said.

"This house ain't right," Norah agreed, and without saying anything to each other, Maggie took her sewing out of doors, and Norah fixed her vegetables on the steps.

Grown people, too, are sometimes afraid of the things that are there but that they can't see, and there was a sense of strain, a sense of waiting in the house, that one couldn't disregard. Perhaps more than any one, Eden's father and Eden's aunt felt it, but since they knew more than any one else in the house, they took less notice of it, for how can you talk reasonably about things you can only feel?

But once Eden found his father smiling in the way one does when one remembers something very dear and very pleasant, and he drew Eden to him and kissed him, and Eden felt more taken care of than he had since the afternoon he had talked last with his friend.

It was as if they all were listening to something that none of them could hear, as if the house were listening to itself, and a spirit of expectancy were floating within it. This it was that drove the simple ones out of the house, and that made the other two talk shyly and about commonplace things. It was almost as if the hands of time had been turned back to the day when the heart of the house stopped beating; there was renewed something like the waiting hush that houses have when some one within their walls is fighting for life. And again it was Eden who broke the magic quiet and set the heart going again. It all happened out of doors, for there was something in the quiet of the house that drove his father and his aunt outside, though they said it was the beauty of the evening that drew them. Eden had been thinking a great deal, you may imagine, about the strange things his friend had told him, and at last he asked shyly:

"Was my mother always good?"

And then it was that the house stopped waiting.

For with a little hug for Eden his aunt said:

"No, but she was lovely, even when she was naughty."

"Do you remember," his father said, "how she used to call to Eden?" He hadn't thought about it for a long time; at first it had hurt him too much to remember, and in time he had ended by almost forgetting.

Then Eden saw his friend, standing near them, dropping her kind, glad look into his eyes, and as she looked at him, the most wonderful thing of all happened to him, for in one brightest moment he remembered.

And in their language that didn't need any words he shouted:

"Darling mother!" and though his aunt and his father didn't know it, they heard him.

The Shell of Sense

BY OLIVIA HOWARD DUNBAR

IT was intolerably unchanged, the dim, dark-toned room. In an agony of recognition my glance ran from one to another of the comfortable, familiar things that my earthly life had been passed among. Incredibly distant from it all as I essentially was, I noted sharply that the very gaps that I myself had left in my bookshelves still stood unfilled; that the delicate fingers of the ferns that I had tended were still stretched futilely toward the light; that the soft agreeable chuckle of my own little clock, like some elderly woman with whom conversation has become automatic, was undiminished.

Unchanged—or so it seemed at first. But there were certain trivial differences that shortly smote me. The windows were closed too tightly; for I had always kept the house very cool, although I had known that Theresa preferred warm rooms. And my work-basket was in disorder: it was preposterous that so small a thing should hurt me so. Then, for this was my first experience of the shadow-folded transition, the odd alternation of my emotions bewildered me. For at one moment the place seemed so humanly familiar, so distinctly my own proper envelope, that for love of it I could have laid my cheek against the wall; while in the next I was miserably conscious of strange new shrillnesses. How could they be endured — and had I ever endured them?—those harsh influences that I now perceived at the window; light and color so blinding that they obscured the form of the wind, tumult so discordant that one could scarcely hear the roses open in the garden below?

But Theresa did not seem to mind any of these things. Disorder, it is true, the dear child had never minded. She was sitting all this time at my desk—at *my* desk,—occupied, I could only too easily surmise how. In the light of my own habits of precision it was plain that that sombre correspondence should have been attended to before; but I believe that I did not really reproach Theresa, for I knew that her notes, when she did write them, were perhaps less perfunctory than mine. She finished the last one as I watched her, and added it to the heap of black-bordered envelopes that lay on the desk. Poor girl! I saw now that they had cost her tears. Yet, living beside her day after day, year after year, I had never discovered what deep tenderness my sister possessed. Toward each other it had been our habit to display only a temperate affection, and I remember having always thought it distinctly fortunate for Theresa, since she was denied my happiness, that she could live so easily and pleasantly without emotions of the devastating sort. . . . And now, for the first time, I was really to behold her. . . . Could it be Theresa, after all, this tangle of subdued turbulences? Let no one suppose that it is an easy thing to bear, the relentlessly lucid understanding that I then first exercised; or that, in its first enfranchisement, the timid vision does not yearn for its old screens and mists.

Suddenly, as Theresa sat there, her head, filled with its tender thoughts of me, held in her gentle hands, I felt Allan's step on the carpeted stair outside. Theresa felt it, too,—but how? for it was not audible. She gave a start, swept the black envelopes out of sight, and pretended to be writing in a little book. Then I forgot to watch her any longer in my absorption in Allan's coming. It was he, of course, that I was awaiting. It was for him that I had made this first lonely, frightened effort to return, to recover. . . . It was not that I had supposed he would allow himself to recognize my presence, for I had long been sufficiently familiar with his hard and fast denials of the invisible. He was so reasonable always, so sane—so blindfolded. But I had hoped that because of his very rejection of the ether that now contained

me I could perhaps all the more safely, the more secretly, watch him, linger near him. He was near now, very near,—but why did Theresa, sitting there in the room that had never belonged to her, appropriate for herself his coming? It was so manifestly I who had drawn him, I whom he had come to seek.

The door was ajar. He knocked softly at it. "Are you there, Theresa?" he called. He expected to find her, then, there in my room? I shrank back, fearing, almost, to stay.

"I shall have finished in a moment," Theresa told him, and he sat down to wait for her.

No spirit still unreleased can understand the pang that I felt with Allan sitting almost within my touch. Almost irresistibly the wish beset me to let him for an instant feel my nearness. Then I checked myself, remembering — oh, absurd, piteous human fears!—that my too unguarded closeness might alarm him. It was not so remote a time that I myself had known them, those blind, uncouth timidities. I came, therefore, somewhat nearer—but I did not touch him. I merely leaned toward him and with incredible softness whispered his name. That much I could not have forborne; the spell of life was still too strong in me.

But it gave him no comfort, no delight. "Theresa!" he called, in a voice dreadful with alarm—and in that instant the last veil fell, and desperately, scarce believingly, I beheld how it stood between them, those two.

She turned to him that gentle look of hers.

"Forgive me," came from him hoarsely. "But I had suddenly the most—unaccountable sensation. Can there be too many windows open? There is such a —chill—about."

"There are no windows open," Theresa assured him. "I took care to shut out the chill. You are not well, Allan!"

"Perhaps not." He embraced the suggestion. "And yet I feel no illness apart from this abominable sensation that persists—persists. . . . Theresa, you must tell me: do I fancy it, or do you, too, feel—something—strange here?"

"Oh, there is something very strange here," she half sobbed. "There always will be."

"Good heavens, child, I didn't mean that!" He rose and stood looking about him. "I know, of course, that you have your beliefs, and I respect them, but you know equally well that I have nothing of the sort! So—don't let us conjure up anything inexplicable."

I stayed impalpably, imponderably near him. Wretched and bereft though I was, I could not have left him while he stood denying me.

"What I mean," he went on, in his low, distinct voice, "is a special, an almost ominous sense of cold. Upon my soul, Theresa,"—he paused—"if I *were* superstitious, if I *were* a woman, I should probably imagine it to seem—a presence!"

He spoke the last word very faintly, but Theresa shrank from it nevertheless.

"*Don't* say that, Allan!" she cried out. "Don't think it, I beg of you! I've tried so hard myself not to think it — and you must help me. You know it is only perturbed, uneasy spirits that wander. With her it is quite different. She has always been so happy—she must still be."

I listened, stunned, to Theresa's sweet dogmatism. From what blind distances came her confident misapprehensions, how dense, both for her and for Allan, was the separating vapor!

Allan frowned. "Don't take me literally, Theresa," he explained; and I, who a moment before had almost touched him, now held myself aloof and heard him with a strange untried pity, new born in me. "I'm not speaking of what you call —spirits. It's something much more terrible." He allowed his head to sink heavily on his chest. "If I did not positively know that I had never done her any harm, I should suppose myself to be suffering from guilt, from remorse. . . . Theresa, you know better than I, perhaps. Was she content, always? Did she believe in me?"

"Believe in you?—when she knew you to be so good!—when you adored her!"

"She thought that? She said it? Then what in Heaven's name ails me?—unless it is all as you believe, Theresa, and she knows now what she didn't know then, poor dear, and minds—"

"Minds what? What do you mean, Allan?"

I, who with my perhaps illegitimate advantage saw so clear, knew that he had

not meant to tell her: I did him that justice, even in my first jealousy. If I had not tortured him so by clinging near him, he would not have told her. But the moment came, and overflowed, and he did tell her—passionate, tumultuous story that it was. During all our life together, Allan's and mine, he had spared me, had kept me wrapped in the white cloak of an unblemished loyalty. But it would have been kinder, I now bitterly thought, if, like many husbands, he had years ago found for the story he now poured forth some clandestine listener; I should not have known. But he was faithful and good, and so he waited till I, mute and chained, was there to hear him. So well did I know him, as I thought, so thoroughly had he once been mine, that I saw it in his eyes, heard it in his voice, before the words came. And yet, when it came, it lashed me with the whips of an unbearable humiliation. For I, his wife, had not known how greatly he could love.

And that Theresa, soft little traitor, should, in her still way, have cared too! Where was the iron in her, I moaned within my stricken spirit, where the steadfastness? From the moment he bade her, she turned her soft little petals up to him—and my last delusion was spent. It was intolerable; and none the less so that in another moment she had, prompted by some belated thought of me, renounced him. Allan was hers, yet she put him from her; and it was my part to watch them both.

Then in the anguish of it all I remembered, awkward, untutored spirit that I was, that I now had the Great Recourse. Whatever human things were unbearable, I had no need to bear. I ceased, therefore, to make the effort that kept me with them. The pitiless poignancy was dulled, the sounds and the light ceased, the lovers faded from me, and again I was mercifully drawn into the dim, infinite spaces.

There followed a period whose length I cannot measure and during which I was able to make no progress in the difficult, dizzying experience of release. "Earth-bound" my jealousy relentlessly kept me. Though my two dear ones had forsworn each other, I could not trust them, for theirs seemed to me an affectation of a more than mortal magnanimity. Without a ghostly sentinel to prick them with sharp fears and recollections, who could believe that they would keep to it? Of the efficacy of my own vigilance, so long as I might choose to exercise it, I could have no doubt, for I had by this time come to have a dreadful exultation in the new power that lived in me. Repeated delicate experiment had taught me how a touch or a breath, a wish or a whisper, could control Allan's acts, could keep him from Theresa. I could manifest myself as palely, as transiently, as a thought. I could produce the merest necessary flicker, like the shadow of a just-opened leaf, on his trembling, tortured consciousness. And these unrealized perceptions of me he interpreted, as I had known that he would, as his soul's inevitable penance. He had come to believe that he had done evil in silently loving Theresa all these years, and it was my vengeance to allow him to believe this, to prod him ever to believe it afresh.

I am conscious that this frame of mind was not continuous in me. For I remember, too, that when Allan and Theresa were safely apart and sufficiently miserable I loved them as dearly as I ever had, more dearly perhaps. For it was impossible that I should not perceive, in my new emancipation, that they were, each of them, something more and greater than the two beings I had once ignorantly pictured them. For years they had practised a selflessness of which I could once scarcely have conceived, and which even now I could only admire without entering into its mystery. While I had lived solely for myself, these two divine creatures had lived exquisitely for me. They had granted me everything, themselves nothing. For my undeserving sake their lives had been a constant torment of renunciation—a torment they had not sought to alleviate by the exchange of a single glance of understanding. There were even marvellous moments when, from the depths of my newly informed heart, I pitied them:—poor creatures, who, withheld from the infinite solaces that I had come to know, were still utterly within that

Shell of sense
So frail, so piteously contrived for pain.

Within it, yes; yet exercising qualities that so sublimely transcended it. Yet the shy, hesitating compassion that thus had birth in me was far from being able to defeat the earlier, earthlier emotion. The two, I recognized, were in a sort of conflict; and I, regarding it, assumed that the conflict would never end; that for years, as Allan and Theresa reckoned time, I should be obliged to withhold myself from the great spaces and linger suffering, grudging, shamed, where they lingered.

It can never have been explained, I suppose, what, to devitalized perception such as mine, the contact of mortal beings with each other appears to be. Once to have exercised this sense-freed perception is to realize that the gift of prophecy, although the subject of such frequent marvel, is no longer mysterious. The merest glance of our sensitive and uncloyed vision can detect the strength of the relation between two beings, and therefore instantly calculate its duration. If you see a heavy weight suspended from a slender string, you can know, without any wizardry, that in a few moments the string will snap; well, such, if you admit the analogy, is prophecy, is foreknowledge. And it was thus that I saw it with Theresa and Allan. For it was perfectly visible to me that they would very little longer have the strength to preserve, near each other, the denuded impersonal relation that they, and that I, behind them, insisted on; and that they would have to separate. It was my sister, perhaps the more sensitive, who first realized this. It had now become possible for me to observe them almost constantly, the effort necessary to visit them had so greatly diminished; so that I watched her, poor, anguished girl, prepare to leave him. I saw each reluctant movement that she made. I saw her eyes, worn from self-searching; I heard her step grown timid from inexplicable fears; I entered her very heart and heard its pitiful, wild beating. And still I did not interfere.

For at this time I had a wonderful, almost demoniacal sense of disposing of matters to suit my own selfish will. At any moment I could have checked their miseries, could have restored happiness and peace. Yet it gave me, and I could weep to admit it, a monstrous joy to know that Theresa thought she was leaving Allan of her own free intention, when it was I who was contriving, arranging, insisting. . . . And yet she wretchedly felt my presence near her; I am certain of that.

A few days before the time of her intended departure my sister told Allan that she must speak with him after dinner. Our beautiful old house branched out from a circular hall with great arched doors at either end; and it was through the rear doorway that always in summer, after dinner, we passed out into the garden adjoining. As usual, therefore, when the hour came, Theresa led the way. That dreadful daytime brilliance that in my present state I found so hard to endure was now becoming softer. A delicate, capricious twilight breeze danced inconsequently through languidly whispering leaves. Lovely pale flowers blossomed like little moons in the dusk, and over them the breath of mignonette hung heavily. It was a perfect place—and it had so long been ours, Allan's and mine. It made me restless and a little wicked that those two should be there together now.

For a little they walked about together, speaking of common, daily things. Then suddenly Theresa burst out:

"I am going away, Allan. I have stayed to do everything that needed to be done. Now your mother will be here to care for you, and it is time for me to go."

He stared at her and stood still. Theresa had been there so long, she so definitely, to his mind, belonged there. And she was, as I also had jealously known, so lovely there, the small, dark, dainty creature, in the old hall, on the wide staircases, in the garden. . . . Life there without Theresa, even the intentionally remote, the perpetually renounced Theresa—he had not dreamed of it, he could not, so suddenly, conceive of it.

"Sit here," he said, and drew her down beside him on a bench, "and tell me what it means, why you are going. Is it because of something that I have been—have done?"

She hesitated. I wondered if she would dare tell him. She looked out and away from him, and he waited long for her to speak.

The pale stars were sliding into their places. The whispering of the leaves was almost hushed. All about them it was still and shadowy and sweet. It was that wonderful moment when, for lack of a visible horizon, the not yet darkened world seems infinitely greater—a moment when anything can happen, anything be believed in. To me, watching, listening, hovering, there came a dreadful purpose and a dreadful courage. Suppose, for one moment, Theresa should not only feel, but *see* me—would she dare to tell him then?

There came a brief space of terrible effort, all my fluttering, uncertain forces strained to the utmost. The instant of my struggle was endlessly long and the transition seemed to take place outside me—as one sitting in a train, motionless, sees the leagues of earth float by. And then, in a bright, terrible flash I knew I had achieved it—I had *attained visibility.* Shuddering, insubstantial, but luminously apparent, I stood there before them. And for the instant that I maintained the visible state I looked straight into Theresa's soul.

She gave a cry. And then, thing of silly, cruel impulses that I was, I saw what I had done. The very thing that I wished to avert I had precipitated. For Allan, in his sudden terror and pity, had bent and caught her in his arms. For the first time they were together; and it was I who had brought them.

Then, to his whispered urging to tell the reason of her cry, Theresa said:

"Frances was here. You did not see her, standing there, under the lilacs, with no smile on her face?"

"My dear, my dear!" was all that Allan said. I had so long now lived invisibly with them, he knew that she was right.

"I suppose you know what it means?" she asked him, calmly.

"Dear Theresa," Allan said, slowly, "if you and I should go away somewhere, could we not evade all this ghostliness? And will you come with me?"

"Distance would not banish her," my sister confidently asserted. And then she said, softly: "Have you thought what a lonely, awesome thing it must be to be so newly dead? Pity her, Allan. We who are warm and alive should pity her. She loves you still,—that is the meaning of it all, you know—and she wants us to understand that for that reason we must keep apart. Oh, it was so plain in her white face as she stood there. And you did not see her?"

"It was your face that I saw," Allan solemnly told her—oh, how different he had grown from the Allan that I had known!—"and yours is the only face that I shall ever see." And again he drew her to him.

She sprang from him. "You are defying her, Allan!" she cried. "And you must not. It is her right to keep us apart, if she wishes. It must be as she insists. I shall go, as I told you. And, Allan, I beg of you, leave me the courage to do as she demands!"

They stood facing each other in the deep dusk, and the wounds that I had dealt them gaped red and accusing. "We must pity her," Theresa had said. And as I remembered that extraordinary speech, and saw the agony in her face, and the greater agony in Allan's, there came the great irreparable cleavage between mortality and me. In a swift, merciful flame the last of my mortal emotions—gross and tenacious they must have been—was consumed. My cold grasp of Allan loosened and a new unearthly love of him bloomed in my heart.

I was now, however, in a difficulty with which my experience in the newer state was scarcely sufficient to deal. How could I make it plain to Allan and Theresa that I wished to bring them together, to heal the wounds that I had made?

Pityingly, remorsefully, I lingered near them all that night and the next day. And by that time I had brought myself to the point of a great determination. In the little time that was left, before Theresa should be gone and Allan bereft and desolate, I saw the one way that lay open to me to convince them of my acquiescence in their destiny.

In the deepest darkness and silence of the next night I made a greater effort than it will ever be necessary for me to make again. When they think of me, Allan and Theresa, I pray now that they will recall what I did that night, and that my thousand frustrations and selfishnesses may shrivel and be blown from their indulgent memories.

Yet the following morning, as she had planned, Theresa appeared at breakfast dressed for her journey. Above in her room there were the sounds of departure. They spoke little during the brief meal, but when it was ended Allan said:

"Theresa, there is half an hour before you go. Will you come up-stairs with me? I had a dream that I must tell you of."

"Allan!" She looked at him, frightened, but went with him. "It was of Frances you dreamed," she said, quietly, as they entered the library together.

"Did I say it was a dream? But I was awake—thoroughly awake. I had not been sleeping well, and I heard, twice, the striking of the clock. And as I lay there, looking out at the stars, and thinking—thinking of you, Theresa,—she came to me, stood there before me, in my room. It was no sheeted spectre, you understand; it was Frances, literally she. In some inexplicable fashion I seemed to be aware that she wanted to make me know something, and I waited, watching her face. After a few moments it came. She did not speak, precisely. That is, I am sure I heard no sound. Yet the words that came from her were definite enough. She said: 'Don't let Theresa leave you. Take her and keep her.' Then she went away. Was that a dream?"

"I had not meant to tell you," Theresa eagerly answered, "but now I must. It is too wonderful. What time did your clock strike, Allan?"

"One, the last time."

"Yes; it was then that I awoke. And she had been with me. I had not seen her, but her arm had been about me and her kiss was on my cheek. Oh, I knew; it was unmistakable. And the sound of her voice was with me."

"Then she bade you, too—"

"Yes, to stay with you. I am glad we told each other." She smiled tearfully and began to fasten her wrap.

"But you are not going—*now!*" Allan cried. "You know that you cannot, now that she has asked you to stay."

"Then you believe, as I do, that it was she?" Theresa demanded.

"I can never understand, but I know," he answered her. "And now you will not go?"

I am freed. There will be no further semblance of me in my old home, no sound of my voice, no dimmest echo of my earthly self. They have no further need of me, the two that I have brought together. Theirs is the fullest joy that the dwellers in the shell of sense can know. Mine is the transcendent joy of the unseen spaces.

Silence

BY ZONA GALE

OH for one of the stars to know me,
To say, "That is she," as I say, "It is there."
Oh for my hills to show me
If they care.
But when I speak of them nothing hears me.
Even the bird on the near bough fears me.
The fire on my hearth does not know that it cheers me.
. . . . Heart that waits by the fire, do you guess
What you must voice in your tenderness?

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The House Surgeon*

A STORY IN TWO PARTS

BY RUDYARD KIPLING

For we must needs die and are as water spilt on the ground which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect any person: yet doth he devise means whereby his banished be not expelled from him.—2 Samuel xiv. 14

ON an evening after Easter Day I sat at a table in a homeward-bound steamer's smoking-room, where half a dozen of us told ghost stories. As our party broke up, a man playing Patience in the next alcove said to me, "I didn't quite catch the end of that last story about the Curse on the family's First-born."

"It turned out to be drains," I explained. "As soon as the new ones were put into the house, the curse was lifted, I believe. I never knew the people myself."

"Ah! I've had *my* drains up twice—I'm on gravel too."

"You don't mean to say you've a ghost in your house? Why didn't you join our party?"

"Any more orders, gentlemen, before the bar closes?" the steward interrupted.

"Sit down again and have one with me," said the Patience-player. "No, it isn't a ghost. Our trouble is more depression than anything else."

"How interesting! Then it's nothing any one can see?"

"It's—it's nothing worse than a little depression. And the odd part is that there hasn't been a death in the house since it was built—in 1883. The lawyer said so. That decided me—my good lady, rather—and he made me pay an extra thousand for it."

"How curious! Unusual too!" I said.

"Yes, isn't it? It was built for three sisters—Moultrie was the name: three old maids. They all lived together; the eldest owned it. I bought it from her lawyer two years ago, and if I've spent a pound on the place first and last, I must have spent five thousand. Electric light; new servants' wing; garden—all that sort of thing. A man and his family ought to be happy after so much expense—ain't it?" He looked at me through the bottom of his glass.

"Does it affect your family much?"

"My good lady—she's a Greek, by the way—and myself are middle-aged. We can bear up against depression, but it's hard on my little girl. I say little, but she's twenty. We send her visiting to escape it. She almost lived in hotels last year, but that isn't pleasant for her. She used to be a canary—a perfect canary—always singing. You ought to hear her. She doesn't sing now. That sort of thing's unwholesome for the young—ain't it?"

"Can't you get rid of the place?" I suggested.

"Not except at a sacrifice, and we are fond of it. Just suits us three. We'd love it if we were allowed."

"What do you mean by not being allowed?"

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"I mean because of the depression. It spoils everything."

"What's it like, exactly?"

"I couldn't very well explain. It must be seen to be appreciated, as the auctioneers say. Now, I was much impressed by the story you were telling just now."

"It wasn't true," I said.

"My tale is true. If you would do me the pleasure to come down and spend the night at my little place, you'd learn more than you would if I talked till morning. Very likely 'twouldn't touch your good self at all. You might be—immune, ain't it? On the other hand, if this influenza—influence—*does* happen to affect you, why, I think it will be an experience."

While he talked he gave me his card, and I saw his name was L. Maxwell McLeod, Esq., of Holmescroft. A City address was tucked away in a corner.

"My business," he added, "used to be furs. If you are interested in furs—I've given thirty years of my life to 'em."

"You're very good," I said.

"Far from it, I assure you. I can meet you next Saturday afternoon anywhere in town you choose to name, and I'll be only too happy to motor you down. It ought to be a delightful run at this time of year—the rhododendrons will be out. I mean it. You don't know how truly I mean it. Very probably it won't affect you at all. And—I think I may say I have the finest collection of narwhal horns in the world. All the best skins and horns have to go through London, and L. Maxwell McLeod he knows where they come from, and where they go to. That's his business."

For the rest of the voyage up Channel, Mr. McLeod talked to me of the assembling, preparation, and sale of the rarer furs, and told me things about the manufacture of fur-lined coats which quite shocked me. Somehow or other, when we landed on Wednesday, I found myself pledged to spend that week-end at Holmescroft.

On Saturday he met me with a well-groomed motor, and ran me out in an hour and a half to an exclusive residential district of dustless roads and legumly designed villas, each standing in from three to five acres of perfectly appointed land. He told me land was selling at eight hundred pounds the acre, and the new golf-links, whose Queen Anne pavilion we passed, had cost nearly twenty-four thousand pounds to create.

Holmescroft was a large, low, two-storied, creeper-covered residence. A veranda at the south side gave on to a garden and two tennis-courts, separated by a tasteful iron fence from a most park-like meadow of five or six acres, where two Jersey cows grazed. Tea was ready in the shade of a promising copper beech, and I could see groups, on the lawn, of young men and maidens, appropriately clothed, playing lawn-tennis in the sunshine.

"A pretty scene, ain't it?" said Mr. McLeod. "My good lady's sitting under the tree, and that's my little girl in pink on the far court. But I'll take you to your room, and you can see 'em all later."

He led me through a wide parquet-floored hall furnished in pale lemon, with huge cloisonné vases, an ebonized and gold grand piano, and banks of pot flowers in Benares brass bowls, up a pale oak staircase to a spacious landing where there was a green velvet settee trimmed with silver. The blinds were drawn, and the light lay in parallel lines on the floors.

He showed me to my room, saying, cheerfully: "You may be a little tired. One often is, without knowing it, after a run through traffic. Don't come down till you feel quite restored. We shall all be in the garden."

My room was rather close, and smelled of perfumed soap. I threw up the window at once, but it opened so close to the door and worked so clumsily that I came within an ace of pitching out, where I should certainly have ruined a rather lopsided laburnum below. As I set about washing off the journey's dust, I began to feel a little tired. But, I reflected, I had not come down here in this weather and among these new surroundings to be depressed, so I began to whistle.

And it was just then that I was aware of a little gray shadow, as it might have been a snowflake seen against the light, floating at an immense distance in the background of my brain. It annoyed me, and I shook my head to get rid of it. Then my brain telegraphed that it was

the forerunner of a swift-striding gloom which there was yet time to escape if I would force my thoughts away from it, as a man leaping for life forces his body forward and away from the fall of a wall. But the gloom overtook me before I could grasp the meaning of the message. I moved toward the bed, every nerve already aching with the foreknowledge of the pain that was to be dealt it, and sat down, while my amazed and angry soul dropped gulf by gulf into that horror of great darkness which is spoken of in the Bible, and which, as the auctioneers say, must be experienced to be appreciated.

Despair upon despair, misery upon misery, fear after fear, each causing their distinct and separate woe, packed in upon me for an unrecorded length of time, until at last they blurred together, and I heard a click in my brain like the click in the ear when one descends in a diving-bell, and I knew that the pressures were equalized within and without, and that, for the moment, the worst was at an end. But I knew also that at any moment the darkness might come down anew; and while I dwelt on this speculation precisely as a man torments a raging tooth with his tongue, it ebbed away into the little gray shadow on the brain of its first coming, and once more I heard my brain, which knew what would happen, telegraph to every quarter for help, release, or diversion.

The door opened, and McLeod reappeared. I thanked him politely, saying I was charmed with my room, anxious to meet Mrs. McLeod, much refreshed with my wash, and so on and so forth. Beyond a little stickiness at the corners of my mouth, it seemed to me that I was managing my words admirably, the while that I myself cowered at the bottom of unclimbable pits. McLeod laid his hand on my shoulder, and said, "You've got it now already, ain't it?"

"Yes," I answered; "it's making me sick!"

"It will pass off when you come outside. I give you my word it will then pass off. Come!"

I shambled out behind him, and wiped my forehead in the hall.

"You mustn't mind," he said. "I expect the run tired you. My good lady is sitting there under the copper beech."

She was a fat woman in an apricot-colored gown, with a heavily powdered face, against which her black, long-lashed eyes showed like currants in dough. I was introduced to many fine ladies and gentlemen of those parts. Magnificently appointed landaus and covered motors swept in and out of the drive, and the air was gay with the merry outcries of the tennis-players.

As twilight drew on they all went away, and I was left alone with Mr. and Mrs. McLeod, while tall men-servants and maid servants took away the tea and tennis things. Miss McLeod had walked a little down the drive with a light-haired young man who apparently knew everything about South-American railway stock. He told me at tea that these were the days of financial specialization.

"I think it went off beautifully, my dear," said Mr. McLeod to his wife, and to me: "You feel all right now, ain't it? Of course you do."

Mrs. McLeod surged across the gravel. Her husband skipped nimbly before her into the south veranda, turned a switch, and all Holmescroft was flooded with light.

"You can do that from your room also," he said as they went in. "There is something in money, ain't it?"

Miss McLeod came up behind me in the dusk. "We have not yet been introduced," she said, "but I suppose you are staying the night?"

"Your father was kind enough to ask me," I replied.

She nodded. "Yes, *I* know; and you know, too, don't you? I saw your face when you came to shake hands with mamma. You felt the depression very soon. It is simply frightful in that bedroom sometimes. What do you think it is—bewitchment? In Greece, where I was a little girl, it might have been, but not in England, do you think? Or *do* you?"

"I don't know what to think," I replied. "I never felt anything like it. Does it happen often?"

"Yes, sometimes. It comes and goes."

"Pleasant!" I said as we walked up and down the gravel at the lawn edge. "What has been your experience of it?"

"That is difficult to say, but—some-



I THOUGHT SOME ONE AT MY ELBOW WAS ABOUT TO SPEAK

times that—that depression is like, as it were"—she gesticulated in most un-English fashion—"a light. Yes, like a light turned into a room—only a light of blackness, do you understand?—into a happy room. For sometimes we are so happy, all we three—so very happy. Then this blackness, it is turned on us just like—ah, I know what I mean now—like the head-lamp of a motor, and we are eclipsed. And then there is another thing—"

The dressing-gong roared, and we entered the overlighted hall. My dressing was a brisk, athletic performance, varied with outbursts of song—careful attention paid to articulation and expression. But nothing happened. As I hurried down-stairs, I thanked Heaven that nothing had happened.

Dinner was served breakfast fashion; the dishes were placed on the sideboard over heaters, and we helped ourselves.

"We always do this when we are alone. So we talk better," said Mr. McLeod.

"And we always are alone," said the daughter.

"Cheer up, Thea. It will come right," he insisted.

"No, papa," she shook her dark head. "Nothing is right while *it* comes."

"It is nothing that ourselves we have ever done in our lives—that I will swear to you," said Mrs. McLeod, suddenly. "And we have changed our servants several times, so we know it is not *them*."

"Never mind. Let us enjoy ourselves while we can," said Mr. McLeod, opening the champagne.

But we did not enjoy ourselves. The talk failed. There were long silences.

"I beg your pardon," I said, for I thought some one at my elbow was about to speak.

"Ah! That is the other thing!" said Miss McLeod. Her mother groaned.

We were silent again, and, in a few seconds it must have been, a live grief beyond words—not ghostly dread or horror, but aching, helpless grief—overwhelmed us, each, I felt, according to his or her nature, and held steady like the beam of a burning-glass. Behind that grief I was aware there was a desire on somebody's part to explain something to which some tremendously important issue hung.

Meantime I rolled bread pills and remembered my aims; McLeod considered his own reflection in a spoon; his wife seemed to be praying, and the girl fidgeted desperately with hands and feet, till the darkness passed on as though the malignant rays of a burning-glass had been shifted from us.

"There," said Miss McLeod, half rising. "Now you see what makes a happy home. Oh, sell it—sell it, father mine, and let us go away!"

"But I've spent thousands on it. You shall go to Harrogate next week, Thea dear."

"I'm only just back from hotels. I am so tired of packing!"

"Cheer up, Thea. It is over. You know it does not often come here twice in the same night. I think we shall dare now to be comfortable."

He lifted a dish-cover and helped his wife and daughter. His face was lined and fallen like an old man's after debauch, but his hand did not shake, and his voice was clear. As he worked to restore us by speech and action, he reminded me of a gray-muzzled collie herding demoralized sheep.

After dinner we sat round the dining-room fire—the drawing-room might have been under the Shadow for aught we knew—talking with the intimacy of gipsies by the wayside, or of wounded comparing notes after a skirmish. By eleven o'clock the three between them had given me every name and detail they could recall that in any way bore on Holmescroft and what they knew of its history.

We went to bed in a fortifying blaze of electric light. My one fear was that the blasting gust of depression would return—the surest way, of course, to bring it. I lay awake till dawn, breathing quickly and suffering lightly beneath what De Quincey inadequately describes as "the oppression of inexpiable guilt." Now as soon as the lovely day was broken, I fell into the most terrible of all dreams—that joyous one in which all past evil has not only been wiped out of our lives, but has never been committed; and in the very bliss of our assured innocence, before our loves shrink and change countenance, we wake to the day we have earned.

It was a coldish morning, but we pre-

ferred to breakfast in the south veranda. The forenoon we spent in the garden, pretending to play games that come out of boxes—such as croquet and clock golf. But most of the time we drew together and talked. The young man who knew about South-American railways took Miss McLeod for a walk in the afternoon, and at five McLeod thoughtfully whirled us all off to dine in town.

"Now, don't say you will tell the Psychological Society, and that you will come again," said Miss McLeod, as we parted. "Because I know you will not."

"You should not say that," said her mother. "You should say, 'Good-by, Mr. Perseus. Come again.'"

"Not him!" the girl cried. "He has seen Medusa's head!"

Looking at myself in the restaurant's mirrors, it seemed to me that I had not much benefited by my week-end. Next morning I wrote out all my Holmescroft notes at fullest length, in the hope that by so doing I could put it all behind me. But the experience worked on my mind, as they say certain imperfectly understood rays work on the body.

Though I am less calculated to make a Sherlock Holmes than any man I know, for I lack both method and patience, the idea of following up the trouble to its source fascinated me. I had no theory to go on, beyond the vague idea that I had come between two poles of a discharge and had taken a shock meant for some one else. This was followed by a feeling of intense irritation. I waited cautiously on myself, expecting to be overtaken by horror of the supernatural, but myself persisted in being humanly indignant, exactly as though it had been the victim of a practical joke. It was in great pains and upheavals—that I felt in every fibre—but its dominant idea to put it coarsely, was to get back a bit of its own. By this I knew that I might go forward if I could find the way.

After a few days it occurred to me to go to the office of Mr. J. M. M. Baxter—the solicitor who had sold Holmescroft to McLeod. I explained that I had some notion of buying the place. Would he act for me in the matter?

Mr. Baxter—a large, gray-haired, throaty-voiced man—showed no enthusiasm. "I sold it to Mr. McLeod," he said. "It 'ud scarcely do for me to start on the running-down tack now. But I can recommend—"

"I know he's asking an awful price," I interrupted, "and, atop of it, he wants an extra thousand for what he calls your clean bill of health."

Mr. Baxter sat up in his chair. I had all his attention.

"Your guarantee with the house. Don't you remember?"

"Yes, yes. That no death had taken place in the house since it was built. I remember perfectly."

He did not gulp as untrained men do when they lie, but his jaws moved stickily, and his eyes, turning toward the deed-boxes on the wall, dulled. I counted seconds—one, two, three—one, two, three—up to ten. A man, I knew, can live through ages of mental depression in that time.

"I remember perfectly." His mouth opened a little as though it had tasted old bitterness.

"Of course *that* sort of thing doesn't appeal to me," I went on. "*I* don't expect to buy a house free from death."

"Certainly not. Utterly absurd!" But it was Mr. McLeod's fancy—his wife's, rather, I believe, and since we could meet it—it was my duty to my clients, at whatever cost to my own feelings—to make him pay."

"That's really why I came to you. I understood from him you knew the place well."

"Oh yes. It originally belonged to some connections of mine."

"The Misses Moultrie, I suppose. How interesting! They must have loved the place before the country round about was built up."

"They were very fond of it indeed."

"I don't wonder. So restful and sunny. I don't see how they could have brought themselves to part with it."

Now it is one of the most constant peculiarities of the English that in polite conversation—and I had striven to be polite—no one ever does or sells anything for mere money's sake.

"Miss Agnes the youngest—fell ill" (he speeded his words a little), "and, as they were very much attached to each other, that broke up the home."

"Naturally. I fancied it must have been something of that kind. One does-



I EXPLAINED THAT I HAD SOME NOTION OF BUYING THE PLACE

n't associate the Staffordshire Moultries" (my Demon of Irresponsibility at that instant created 'em) "with with being hard up."

"I don't know whether we're related to them," he answered, importantly. "We may be, but our branch of the family comes from the Midlands."

I give this talk at length, because I am so proud of my first attempt at detective work. But when I left him twenty minutes later, with instructions to move against the owner of Holmescroft with a view to purchase, I was more bewildered than any Doctor Watson at the opening of a story.

Why should a middle-aged solicitor turn plover's-egg color and drop his jaw when reminded of so innocent and festal a matter as that no death had ever occurred in a house that he had sold? If I knew my English vocabulary at all, the tone in which he had said "the youngest sister fell ill" meant that she had gone out of her mind. That might explain his change of countenance, and it was just possible that her demented influence still clung about Holmescroft; but all the rest was beyond me.

I was relieved when I reached McLeod's City office, and could tell him what I had done—not what I thought.

McLeod was quite willing to enter into the game of the pretended purchase, but did not see how it would help if I knew Baxter.

"He's the only living soul I can get at who was connected with Holmescroft," I said.

"Ah! Living soul is good," said McLeod. "At any rate our little girl will be pleased that you are still interested in us. Won't you come down some day this week?"

"How is the—the depression now?" I asked.

He screwed up his face. "Simply frightful!" he said. "Then is at Droitwich."

"I should like it immensely, but I must cultivate Baxter for the present. You'll be sure and keep him busy your end, won't you?"

He looked at me with quiet contempt. "Do not be afraid. I shall be a good Jew. I shall be my own solicitor."

Before a fortnight was over, Baxter ruefully admitted that McLeod was better than most firms in the business. We buyers were coy, argumentative, shocked at the price of Holmescroft, inquisitive, and cold by turns, but Mr. McLeod the seller easily met and surpassed us; and Mr. Baxter entered every letter, telegram, and consultation at the proper rates in a cinematograph film of a bill. At the end of a month he said it looked as though McLeod, thanks to him, were really going to listen to reason. I was many pounds out of pocket, but I had learned something of Mr. Baxter on the human side. I deserved it. Never in my life have I worked to cajole, amuse, and flatter a human being as I worked over my solicitor.

It appeared that he golfed. Therefore I was an enthusiastic beginner, anxious to learn. Twice I invaded his office, with a bag (McLeod lent it), full of the apparatus needed in this detestable game, and a vocabulary to match. The third time the ice broke, and Mr. Baxter took me to his links, quite ten miles off, where in a maze of tramway lines, railroads, and nursery grounds, we skelped our devoted way round the holes like barges plunging through head seas. He played slowly, and had never expected to meet any one worse, but when he realized my form, I think he began to like me, for he took me in hand by the two hours together. After a fortnight he could give me no more than a stroke a hole, and when, with this allowance, I once managed to beat him by one, he was honestly glad, and assured me that I should be a golfer if I stuck to it. I was sticking to it for my own ends, but now and again my conscience pricked me: for the man was a nice man. Between games he supplied me with odd pieces of evidence, and as that he had known the Moultries all his life, being their cousin, and that Miss Mary, the eldest, was an unforgiving woman who would never let bygones be. I naturally wondered what she might have against him; and somehow connected him unfavorably with [illegible].

"I could ought to forgive and forget," he volunteered one day between rounds. "Specially where, in the nature of things, you can't be sure of their delusions. Don't you think so?"

"It all depends on the nature of the evidence on which one forms one's judgment," I answered.

"Nonsense!" he cried. "I'm lawyer enough to know that there's nothing in the world so misleading as circumstantial evidence. 'Never was."

"Why? Have you ever seen men hanged on it?"

"Hanged! People have been supposed to be eternally lost on it," his face turned gray again. "I don't know how it is with you, but my consolation is that God must know. He *must!* Things that seem on the face of 'em like murder, or, say, suicide, may appear different to God. Heh?"

"That's what the murderer and the suicide can always hope—I suppose."

"I've expressed myself clumsily as usual 'Always do. The facts as God knows 'em—may *be* different—even after the most clinching evidence. I've always said that—both as a lawyer and a man, but some people won't. I don't want to judge 'em—we'll say they can't—believe it; whereas *I* say there's always a working chance—a certainty—that the worst hasn't happened." He stopped and cleared his throat. "Now, let's come on! This time next week I shall be taking my holiday."

"What links?" I asked, carelessly, while twins in a perambulator got out of our line of fire.

"A potty little nine-hole affair at a Hydro in the Midlands. My cousins stay there. Not but what the fourth and the seventh holes take some doing. You could manage it, though," he said, encouragingly. "You're playing much better. It's only your approach shots that are weak."

"You're right. I can't approach for nuts! I shall go to pieces while you're away—with no one to teach me," I said, mournfully.

"I haven't taught you anything," he said, delighted with the compliment.

"I owe all I've learnt to you, anyhow. When will you come back?"

"Look here," he began, "I don't know your engagements, but I've no one to play with at Burry Mills. Why couldn't you take a few days off and join me there? I warn you it will be rather dull. It's a throat and gout cure—baths, massage, electricity, and so forth. But the fourth and the seventh holes really take some doing."

"I'm for the game," I answered, valiantly; Heaven well knowing that I hated every stroke and word of it.

"That's the proper spirit! As their lawyer I must ask you not to say anything to my cousins about Holmescroft. It upsets 'em. Always did. But, speaking as man to man, it would be very pleasant for me if you could see your way to—"

I saw it as soon as decency permitted, and thanked him sincerely. According to my now well-developed theory, he had certainly misappropriated his aged cousins' moneys under power of attorney, and had probably driven poor Agnes Moultrie out of her wits, yet I wished that he was not so gentle, and good-tempered, and innocent-eyed.

[TO BE CONCLUDED.]

Room!

BY ELLEN M. H. GATES

We ask for room where a hope can grow,
A dear old hope that has tried to live;
A place where its starving roots may go,
And secret springs their moisture give.
Room! room for a hope that cannot pass,
That drinks the lightest dews that spill
From broken boughs and withered grass,
And clings to life with desperate will

The House Surgeon*

BY RUDYARD KIPLING

A STORY IN TWO PARTS—PART II.

BEFORE I joined Baxter at Burry Mills Hydro, I spent a night at Holmescroft. Miss McLeod had returned from her Hydro, and at first we made very merry on the open lawn in the sunshine over the manners and customs of the English resorting to such places. She knew dozens of hydros, and warned me how to behave in them, while Mr. and Mrs. McLeod stood aside and adored her.

"Ah! That's the way she always comes back to us," he said. "Pity it wears off so soon, ain't it? You ought to hear her sing, *With mirth thou pretty bird.*"

We had the house to face through the evening, and there we neither laughed nor sang. The gloom fell on us as we entered, and did not shift till ten o'clock, when we crawled out, as it were, from beneath it.

"It has been bad this summer," said Mrs. McLeod, in a whisper, after we realized that we were freed. "Sometimes I think that the house will get up and cry out—it is so bad."

"How?"

"Have you forgotten what comes after—the—the depression?"

So then we waited about the small fire, and the dead air in the room presently filled and pressed down upon us with the sensation (but words are useless here), as though some dumb and bound power were striving against gag and bond to deliver its soul of an articulate word. It passed in a few minutes, and I fell to thinking about Mr. Baxter's conscience, and Agnes Moultrie, gone mad in the well-lit bedroom that waited me. These reflections secured me a night during which I rediscovered how, from purely mental causes, a man can be physically sick; but the sickness was bliss compared to my dreams when the birds waked. On my departure McLeod gave me a beautiful narwhal's horn, much as a nurse gives a child sweets for being brave at a dentist's.

"There's no duplicate to it in the world," he said, "else it would have come to old Max McLeod," and he tucked it into the motor. Miss McLeod, on the far side of the car, whispered, "Have you found anything, Mr. Perseus?"

I shook my head.

"Then I shall be chained to my rock all my life," she went on. "Only don't tell papa."

I supposed she was thinking of the young gentleman who specialized in South-American railways, for I noticed a ring on the third finger of her left hand.

I went straight from that house to Burry Mills Hydro, keen, for the first time in my life, on playing golf, which is guaranteed to occupy the mind. Baxter had taken me a room communicating with his own, and, after lunch, introduced me to a tall, horse-headed elderly lady of decided manners, whom a white-haired maid pushed along in a Bath chair through the park-like grounds of the Hydro. She was Miss Mary Moultrie, and she coughed and cleared her throat just like Baxter. She suffered—she told me it was the Moultrie caste-mark—from some obscure form of chronic bronchitis, complicated with spasm of the glottis; and, in a dead flat voice, with a sunken eye that looked and saw not, told me what washes, gargles, pastilles, and inhalations she had proved most beneficial. From her I was passed on to her younger sister—Miss Elizabeth—a small and withered thing with twitching lips, victim, she told me, to very much the same sort of throat, but secretly devoted to another set of medicines. When she went away with Baxter and the Bath chair, I fell across a Major of the Indian Army

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with gout in his glassy eyes, and a stomach which he had taken all round the Continent. He laid everything before me; and him I escaped only to be ravished by a matron with a tendency to follicular tonsilitis and eczema. Baxter waited hand and foot on his cousins till five o'clock, trying, I saw, to atone for his treatment of the dead sister. Miss Mary ordered him about like a dog.

"I warned you it would be dull," he said, when we met in the smoking-room.

"It's tremendously interesting," I said. "But how about a look round the links?"

"Unluckily damp always affects my eldest cousin. I've got to get her a fresh bronchitis-kettle. Arthurs broke her old one yesterday."

We slipped out to the chemist's shop in the town, and he bought a large glittering tin thing whose workings he explained.

"I'm used to this sort of work. I come up here pretty often," he said. "I've the family throat too."

"You're a good man," I said. "A very good man."

He turned towards me in the evening light among the beeches, and his face was changed to what it might have been a generation before.

"You see," he said, huskily, "there was the youngest—Agnes. Before she fell ill, you know. But she didn't like leaving her sisters."

He hurried on with his odd-shaped load, and left me among the ruins of my black theories. The man with that face had done Agnes Moultrie no wrong

We never played our game. I was waked between two and three in the morning from my hygienic bed by Baxter in an ulster over orange and white pajamas, which I should not have suspected from his character.

"My cousin has had some sort of a seizure," he said. "Will you come? I don't want to wake the doctor Don't want to make a scandal. Quick!"

So I came quickly, and led by the white-haired Arthurs in a jacket and petticoat, entered a double-bedded room reeking with steam and Friar's Balsam. The electrics were all on. Miss Mary—I knew her by her height—was at the open window, wrestling with Miss Elizabeth, who had her by the knees. Her hand was at her throat, which was streaked with blood.

"She's done it. She's done it too!" Miss Elizabeth panted. "Hold her! Help me!"

"Oh, I say! Women don't cut their throats," Baxter whispered.

"My God! Has she cut her throat?" the maid cried, and with no warning rolled over in a faint. Baxter pushed her under the wash-basins, and leaped to hold the gaunt woman who crowed and whistled as she struggled toward the window. He took her by the throat, and she struck out wildly.

"All right! She's only cut her hand," he said. "Wet towel—quick!"

While I got that, he pushed her backward. Her strength seemed almost as great as his. I swabbed at her throat when I could, and found no mark; then helped him to control her a little. Miss Elizabeth leaped back to bed, wailing like a child.

"Tie up her hand somehow," said Baxter. "Don't let it drip all over the place. She"—he stepped on broken glass in his slippers—"she must have broken a pane."

Miss Mary lurched toward the open window once more, dropped on her knees, her head on the ledge, and lay quiet, surrendering her cut hand to me.

"What did she do?" Baxter turned toward Miss Elizabeth in the far bed.

"She was going to throw herself out of the window," was the answer. "I stopped her and sent Arthurs for you. Oh, we can never hold up our heads again!"

Miss Mary writhed and fought for breath. Baxter found a shawl, which he threw over her shoulders. "Nonsense!" said he. "That isn't like Mary," but his face worked while he said it.

"You wouldn't believe about Aggie, John. Perhaps you will now!" said Miss Elizabeth. "I *saw* her do it! And she's cut her throat too!"

"She hasn't," I said. "It's only her hand"

Miss Mary suddenly broke from us with an indescribable grunt, flew, rather than ran, to her sister's bed, and there shook her as one furious schoolgirl would shake another.

"No such thing!" she croaked. "How dare you think so, you wicked little fool?"

"Get into bed, Mary," said Baxter. "You'll catch a chill."

She obeyed, but sat with the gray shawl round her lean shoulders, glaring at her sister. "I'm better now," she crowed. "Arthurs let me sit out too long. Where's Arthurs? The kettle."

"Never mind Arthurs," said Baxter. "*You* get the kettle." I hastened to bring it from the side table. "Now, Mary, as God sees you, tell us what you've done."

His lips were dry, and he could not moisten them with his tongue.

Miss Mary applied herself to the mouth of the kettle, and between indraws of steam said: "The spasm came on just now, while I was asleep. I was nearly choking to death. So I went to the window. I've often done it before, without waking any one. Bessie's such an old maid about draughts. I tell you I was choking to death. I couldn't manage the catch, and I nearly fell out. That window opens too low. I cut my hand trying to save myself. Who has tied it up in this filthy handkerchief? I wish you had had my throat, Bessie. I never was nearer dying!" She scowled on us all impartially, while her sister sobbed.

From the bottom of the bed we heard a quivering voice: "Is she dead? Have they took her away? Oh, I never could bear the sight o' blood!"

"Arthurs," said Miss Mary, "you are an hireling. Go away!"

It is my belief that Arthurs crawled out on all fours, but I was busy picking up broken glass from the carpet.

Then Baxter, seated on the foot of the bed, began to cross-examine in a voice I scarcely recognized. No one could for an instant have doubted the genuine rage of Miss Mary against her sister, her cousin, or her maid; and that the doctor should have been called in—for she did me the honor of calling me doctor—was the last drop. She was choking with her throat; had rushed to the window for air; had nearly pitched out, and in catching at the window-bars, had cut her hand. Over and over she made this clear to the intent Baxter. Then she turned to her sister and tongue-lashed her savagely.

"You mustn't blame me," Miss Bessie faltered, at last. "You know what we think of, night and day."

"I'm coming to that," said Baxter. "Listen to me. What *you* did, Mary, misled four people into thinking you—you meant to make away with yourself."

"Isn't one suicide in the family enough? O God, help and pity us! You couldn't have believed that!" she cried

"The evidence was complete. Now, don't you think"—Baxter's finger wagged under her nose—"*can't* you think that poor Aggie did the same thing at Holmescroft when she fell out of the window?"

"She had the same throat," said Miss Elizabeth. "Exactly the same symptoms. Don't you remember, Mary?"

"Which was her bedroom?" I asked of Baxter, in an undertone.

"Over the south veranda, looking on to the tennis lawns."

"I nearly fell out of that very window when I was at Holmescroft—opening it to get some air. The sill doesn't come much above your knees," I said.

"You hear that, Mary? Mary, do you hear what this gentleman says? Won't you believe that what nearly happened to you—must have happened to poor Aggie that night? For God's sake—for her sake—Mary, *won't* you believe?"

There was a long silence while the steam-kettle puffed.

"If I could have proof—if I could have proof," said she, and broke into most horrible tears.

Baxter motioned to me, and I crept away to my room, and lay awake till morning, thinking more specially of the dumb grief at Holmescroft which wished to explain itself. I hated Miss Mary as perfectly as though I had known her for twenty years, but I felt that, alive or dead, I should not like her to condemn me.

Yet at midday, when I saw her in her Bath chair, Arthurs behind, and Baxter and Miss Elizabeth on either side, in the park-like grounds of the Hydro, I found it difficult to arrange my facts.

"Now that you know all about it," said Baxter, aside, after the first strangeness of our meeting was over, "it's only fair to tell you that my poor cousin did not die in Holmescroft at all. She was dead when they found her in the morning—just dead."



COME DOWN TO HOLMESCROFT AND SATISFY YOURSELF"

"Under that laburnum outside the window?" I asked, for I suddenly remembered the crooked, evil thing

"Exactly. She broke the tree in falling. But no death has ever taken place in the house—as far as we were concerned. Never has. You can make yourself quite easy on that point. Mr. McLeod's extra thousand for what you called the 'clean bill of health' was something toward my cousins' estate when we sold. It was my duty as their lawyer to get it for them—at any cost to my own feelings."

I know better than to argue when the English talk about their duty. So I agreed with my solicitor

"Their sister's death must have been a great blow to your cousins," I went on. The Bath chair was behind me.

"Unspeakable," Baxter whispered. "They brooded on it day and night. No wonder! If their theory of poor Aggie making away with herself was correct, she was eternally lost!"

"Do you believe that she made away with herself?"

"No, thank God! Never have! And after what happened to Mary last night, I see perfectly what happened to poor Aggie. She had the family throat too. By the way, Mary thinks you are a doctor, otherwise she wouldn't like your having been in her room."

"Very good. Is she convinced now about her sister's death?"

"She'd give anything to be able to believe it, but she's a hard woman, and brooding along certain lines makes one groovy. I have sometimes been afraid for her reason—on the religious side, don't you know. Elizabeth doesn't matter. Brain of a hen. Always had."

Here Arthurs summoned me to the Bath chair, and the ravaged face, beneath its knitted Shetland-wool hood, of Miss Mary Moultrie.

"I need not remind you, I hope, of the seal of secrecy—absolute secrecy—in your profession," she began. "Thanks to my cousin's and my sister's stupidity, you have found out—" she blew her nose.

"Please don't excite her, sir," said Arthurs, at the back.

"But, my dear Miss Moultrie, I only know what I've seen, of course, it seems to me that what you thought was a tragedy in your sister's case turns out, on your own evidence, so to speak, to have been an accident. A dreadfully sad one—but absolutely an accident."

"Do you believe that too?" she cried. "Or are you only saying it to comfort me?"

"I believe it from the bottom of my heart. Come down to Holmescroft for an hour—for half an hour—and satisfy yourself."

"Of what? You don't understand. I see the house every day—every night. I am always there in spirit—waking or sleeping. I couldn't face it in reality!"

"But you must," I said. "If you go there in the spirit, the greater need for you to come there in the flesh. Go to your sister's room once more, and see the window—I nearly fell out of it myself. It's—it's awfully low and dangerous. That would convince you," I pleaded.

"Yet Aggie had slept in that room for years," she interrupted.

"You've slept in your room here for a long time, haven't you? But you nearly fell out of the window when you were choking."

"That is true. That is one thing true," she nodded. "And I might have been killed as—perhaps—Aggie was killed."

"In that case your own sister and cousin and maid would have said you had committed suicide, Miss Moultrie. Come down to Holmescroft, and go over the place just once."

"You are lying," she said, quite quietly. "You don't want me to come down to see a window. It is something else. I warn you we are Evangelicals. We don't believe in prayers for the dead. 'As the tree falls'—"

"Yes. I dare say. But you persist in thinking that your sister committed suicide—"

"No! No! I have always prayed that I might have misjudged her."

Arthurs at the Bath chair spoke up: "Oh, Miss Mary! You would 'ave it from the first that poor Miss Aggie 'ad made away with herself; an' of course Miss Bessie took the notion from you. Only Master—Mister John stood out, and—and I'd 'ave taken my Bible oath you was making away with yourself last night."

Miss Mary leaned toward me, one finger on my sleeve.

"If going to Holmescroft kills me," she said, "you will have the murder of a fellow creature on your conscience for all eternity."

"I'll risk it," I answered. Remembering what torment the mere reflection of her torments had cast on Holmescroft, and remembering, above all, the dumb Thing that filled the house with its desire to speak, I felt that it might be a good riddance.

Baxter was amazed at the proposed visit, but at a nod from that terrible woman went off to make arrangements. Then I sent a telegram to McLeod, bidding him and his vacate Holmescroft for that afternoon. Miss Mary should be alone with her dead, as I had been alone.

I expected untold trouble in transporting her, but to do her justice, the promise given for the journey, she underwent it without murmur, spasm, or unnecessary word. Miss Bessie, pressed in a corner by the window, wept behind her veil, and from time to time tried to take hold of her sister's hand. Baxter wrapped himself in his newly found happiness as selfishly as a bridegroom, for he sat still, and smiled.

"So long as I know that Aggie didn't make away with herself," he explained. "I tell you frankly I don't care what happened. She's as hard as a rock—Mary. Always was. *She* won't die."

We led her out on to the platform like a blind woman, and so got her into the cab. The half-hour crawl to Holmescroft was the most racking experience of the day. McLeod had obeyed my instructions. There was no one visible in the house or the gardens; and the front door stood open.

Miss Mary rose from beside her sister, stepped forth first, and entered the hall.

"Come, Bessie," she cried.

"I daren't. Oh, I daren't."

"Come!" Her voice had altered. I felt Baxter start. "There's nothing to be afraid of."

"Good heavens!" said Baxter. "She's running up the stairs. We'd better follow."

"Let's wait below. She's going to the room."

We heard the door of the bedroom I knew open and shut, and we waited in the lemon-colored hall, heavy with the scent of flowers.

"I've never been into it since it was sold," Baxter sighed. "What a lovely, restful place it is! Poor Aggie used to arrange the flowers."

"Restful!" I began, but stopped of a sudden, for I felt all over my bruised soul that Baxter was speaking truth. It was a light, spacious, airy house, full of the sense of well-being and peace—above all things, peace. I ventured into the dining-room, where the thoughtful McLeods had left a small fire. There was no terror there, present or lurking; and in the drawing-room, which for good reasons we had never cared to enter, the sun and the peace and the scent of the flowers worked together, as is fit in an inhabited house. When I returned to the hall, Baxter was sweetly asleep on a couch, looking most unlike a middle-aged solicitor who had spent a broken night with an exacting cousin.

There was ample time for me to review it all—to felicitate myself upon my magnificent acumen (barring some error about Baxter as a thief, and, possibly, a murderer), before the door above opened, and Baxter, evidently a light sleeper, sprang awake.

"I've had a heavenly nap," he said, rubbing his eyes. "Good Lord! That's not *their* step!"

But it was. I had never before been privileged to see the Shadow turned backward on the dial—the years ripped bodily off poor human shoulders—old sunken eyes filled and alight—harsh lips moistened and human.

"John," Miss Mary called, "I know now. Aggie didn't do it!" and, "She didn't do it!" echoed Miss Bessie, and giggled.

"I did not think it wrong to say a prayer," Miss Mary continued. "Not for her soul, of course, but for our peace. Then I was convinced."

"Then we got conviction," the younger sister piped.

"We've misjudged poor Aggie, John. But I feel she knows now. Wherever she is, she knows that we know she is guiltless."

"Yes, she knows. I felt it too," said Miss Elizabeth.



THEA SANG AN OLD ENGLISH SONG

"I never doubted," said John Baxter, whose face was beautiful at that hour "Not from the first. Never have!"

"You never offered me proof, John. Now, thank God, it will not be the same any more. I can henceforward think of Aggie without sorrow." Miss Mary tripped, absolutely tripped, across the hall. "What ideas these Jews have of arranging furniture!" She spied me behind a big cloisonné vase.

"I've seen the window," she said, remotely. "You took a great risk in advising me to undertake such a journey. However, as it turns out, I forgive you; and I pray you may never know what mental anguish means. Bessie! Look at this atrocious piano! Do you suppose, doctor, these people would offer one tea? I miss mine."

"I will go and see," I said, and explored McLeod's new-built servants' wing. It was in the servants' hall that I unearthed the McLeod family, bursting with anxiety

"Tea for three, quick," I said. "If you ask me any questions now, I shall have a fit!" So Mrs. McLeod got it, and I was butler, amid murmured apologies from Baxter, still smiling to himself, and the cold disapproval of Miss Mary, who thought the pattern of the china vulgar. However, she ate well, and sent me to get her a napkin. Happiness may lighten people's souls, but it does not in the least soften their manners.

They went away in the twilight—the twilight that I had once dreaded. They were going to an hotel in London, to rest after the fatigues of the day, and as their cab turned down the drive, I capered on the door-step, with the all-darkened house behind me.

Then I heard the uncertain feet of the McLeods, and bade them not turn on the lights, but to feel to feel what I had done; for the Shadow was gone, with the dumb desire in the air. They drew short, but afterwards deeper breaths, like bathers entering chill water; separated one from the other; moved about the hall; tiptoed up-stairs; raced down; and then Miss McLeod, and I believe her mother, though she denies this, embraced me. I know McLeod did.

It was a disgraceful evening. To say we roted through the house is to put it mildly. We played a sort of Blind-Man's Buff along the darkest passages, in the unlighted drawing-room and little dining-room, calling cheerily to one another after each exploration that here, and here, and here, the trouble had removed itself. We came up to *the* bedroom—mine for the night again—and sat, the women on the bed, and we men on chairs, drinking in blessed draughts of peace and comfort and cleanliness of soul, while I told them my tale again, and received fresh praise, thanks, and blessings.

When the servants, returned from their day's outing, gave us a supper of cold fried fish, McLeod had sense enough to offer no wine. We had been practically drunk since nightfall, and grew incoherent on milk and water.

"I like that Baxter," said McLeod. "He's a sharp man. The death wasn't *in* the house, but he ran it pretty close, ain't it?"

"And the joke of it is that he supposes I want to buy the place from you," I said. "Are you selling?"

"Not for twice what I paid for it—now," said McLeod. "I'll keep you in furs all your life, but not our Holmescroft."

"No—never our Holmescroft," said Miss McLeod. "We'll ask *him* here on Tuesday, mamma." They squeezed each other's hands.

"Now tell me," said Mrs. McLeod. "That tall one I saw out of the scullery window—did she tell you she was always here in the spirit? I hate her. She made all this bother. It was not her house after she had sold it. What do you think?"

"I suppose," I answered, "she brooded over what she thought was her sister's suicide night and day—she confessed she did—and her thoughts being concentrated on this place, they felt like a—like a burning-glass."

"Burning-glass is good," said McLeod.

"I said it was like a light of blackness turned on us," cried the girl, twiddling her ring. "That must have been when she thought about her sister and the house."

"Ah, the poor Aggie!" said Mrs. McLeod. "The poor Aggie, trying to tell every one it was not so! No wonder we felt Something wished to say Some-

thing. Thea, Max, do you remember that night—"

"We need not remember any more," McLeod interrupted. "It is not our trouble. They have told each other now."

"Do you think, then," said Miss McLeod, "that those two, the living ones, were actually told something—up-stairs—in your—in the room?"

"I can't say. At any rate they were made happy, and they ate a big tea afterward. As your father says, it is not our trouble any longer—thank God!"

"Amen!" said McLeod. "Now, Thea, let us have some music after all these months. *With mirth, thou pretty bird*, ain't it? You ought to hear that."

Thea sang an old English song which I had never heard before:

"With mirth thou pretty bird rejoice
Thy Maker's praise enhanced,
Lift up thy shrill and pleasant voice
Thy God is high advanced!
Thy food before He did provide
And gives it in a fitting side
Wherewith be thou sufficed!
Why shouldst thou now unpleasant be
Thy wrath against God venting,
That He a little bird made thee,
Thy silly head tormenting
Because He made thee not a man.
Oh, Peace! He hath well thought thereon
Therewith be thou sufficed!"

THE END.

All in the Bud and Bloom o' the Year

BY SARAH PIATT

ALL in the bud and bloom o' the year,
When the heart is sad as the first green leaf—
(Love comes not back with the rose, I fear).
Ah, the time of joy is the time of grief—
All in the bud and bloom o' the year.

All in the bud and bloom o' the year.
When the grass comes back, to cover the dead—
(Love comes not back with the grass, I fear;
Does he sleep below, with a stone at his head?)—
All in the bud and bloom o' the year.

All in the bud and bloom o' the year.
The wind keeps singing a lover's rhyme—
(Love comes not back on the wind, I fear).
And the sweetest time is the saddest time—
All in the bud and bloom o' the year

All in the bud and bloom o' the year.
Heavy with honey, the bee blows by—
(Love comes not back with the bee, I fear;
Love's sweet is bitter, Love's laugh is a cry) -
All in the bud and bloom o' the year.

All in the bud and bloom o' the year.
When wings grow weary of alien skies—
(Love comes not back with the bird, I fear
Love builds no nest, save in Paradise!)—
All in the bud and bloom o' the year

The Sycamore

BY OLIVIA HOWARD DUNBAR

ALTHOUGH always a matter for marvelling, the continued existence of the Hyatts seemed least a miracle in the high tide of the year. When the sun streamed hot upon their long-chilled house and vegetables were swelling in the garden, one could relax a little one's keen concern for them. Mather, who saw most of the inexplicable family, used to point this out, sometimes whimsically, sometimes in a kind of desperation, to those other old friends of the painter and his wife who couldn't help seeing what Hyatt painted and who couldn't help remembering how Cynthia looked. Although, to understand them at all, Mather said, it was positively necessary to spell Nature with a capital. You had to believe that they, or that Cynthia and her charming brood at least, were, in some explicit sense, the foster-children of a beneficent earth-mother, who chose to keep them nourished from her own mysteriously yielding breast and who saw to it that they bloomed, though in an even scantier soil than wood-flowers, yet with a wood-flower's wild and startling grace. As no social or economic system could consistently sustain them, so none but a fantastic theory could explain their triumphant survival.

Persons of a practical and helpful turn of mind used now and then to devise relief programmes for the Hyatts, and then entrust to Mather the responsibility for their adoption. A little flat somewhere opposite the Palisades, with an instructor's post for Ansel, was a plan that had been urged with disinterested persistence, and that Mather had once or twice brought himself to the point of delicately mentioning to Cynthia—one didn't broach such matters to Ansel directly. And Cynthia always answered, with her look of bright astonishment:

"But *why* should we give up everything that we love? And what would you have Ansel paint?"

One simply couldn't explain without insulting them; that is, Mather thought he couldn't. So the Hyatts clung to their green valley, and dined on rice and milk, and Cynthia became constantly more lovely and every few years proudly displayed a new baby; and Ansel, who, alone of his thriving family, was becoming appreciably shrivelled, continued to paint landscapes that always included an ancient sycamore.

Cynthia herself used to tell charmingly the story of their coming to live in the valley; but a flaunted devotion to her husband, of which this and every other narrative of hers was made the vehicle, was more becoming in Cynthia's case than in that of many women. They had impulsively married, she used to relate, rather near the end of the month, when her own mite of an income was quite thoughtlessly exhausted and when Ansel's own resources seemed more than usually spectral; so by way of spending a frugal honeymoon they had started out on foot through Central Park, and a couple of days later found themselves in what later proved to be an untravelled part of Connecticut. At the time they merely knew it was their inevitable home. The shabby stateliness of the neglected old house, serene as a temple amid its indignities, had made a curious appeal to Cynthia's abundant tenderness; and Ansel had as promptly perceived that the gentle slopes of the valley that surrounded it had already too long awaited his understanding glance. Leaving him, therefore, to guard their discovery, she had begged a ride to the nearest town, where she had found an astonished agent and brought him back with her; whereupon they had all signed papers, and she had promised that the first instalment of rent be paid within a week; and Ansel, Cynthia always concluded, had never left the place since that day.

The statement was almost literally

true. What he had found here, almost without seeking, had satisfied the young painter's taste with dangerous completeness. It was his pride that he rejected, in a landscape, all intemperate luxuriance, all sensational contrast; and in this one he found neither. Its suggestive meagreness enraptured him. Even those vapors were of a singular tenuity that rose often from the slow-flowing stream, and floating up the hillside cast their delicate blue veil about the sycamore at the top. It was the first subject that he had chosen there, the sycamore; and he had been painting it ever since.

However, this latter information would scarcely have come from Cynthia. The source of her husband's remarkably constant inspiration held for her a kind of sacred awe that was by no means incompatible with her own liking for objects more radiant and vigorous. Lightning had once grotesquely riven the sycamore's trunk; and to Cynthia's whimsical vision the tree had always, on even the hottest days, a look of suffering from chill. And it seemed to her as if, from the moment that her husband began to paint it, the tree strove, in its uncouth way, to perform its appointed part. From year to year it more and more expressed to her the strain that its long and rigid pose inflicted, for there was never a season nor an hour that it was given respite. Yet she, or indeed any one, would have conceded that where it nobly stood, its gaunt arms flung against the changing sky, it had at all seasons a certain tragic effectiveness. Nobody questioned that, not even the painters who followed Hyatt's performances with such keen irritation, yet who couldn't bring themselves to the point of definitely dismissing their old friend's work and then forgetting him. It wasn't that he had not, now and then, hit off his idea rather capably; it was only that there seemed such excellent reason to fear that in ten years more he would still be reiterating his already outworn motive. But there was so much that was lovable and charming about Hyatt, they would insist to each other, quoting Mather's stories of what went on off there in the valley, miles away from the railroad—and an abominable place to find one's way to! Moreover, they all remembered Cynthia.

Mather's belief was that it would be the best possible thing for the Hyatt family, with its pressing material needs, if the sycamore should be cut down; for he doubted if even Ansel would keep on contemplating the stump. It was of course idle to wish that the tree would die. It would even be idle deliberately to poison it and put it out of its misery, as the flippant Cartwright had suggested, for he believed that Ansel would find the tree no less serviceable if it were dead. Indeed, it would then even more directly further what he believed to be his friend's artistic decadence. To Mather's own vigorous and wholesome fancy, the tree already quite sufficiently suggested death, with its livid patches of trunk, its writhing postures, and its melancholy crumpled leaves; and he believed that the only hope for Hyatt would lie in turning away from this too familiar spectacle and in painting something innocent and vivid and fresh. The year before, he had ventured, after much hesitation, to indicate to his friend one way in which this transition might be accomplished; and had himself done a study of Cynthia and the four little girls, grouped in sunlight. The thing had proved a greater success almost than the painter had intended; its only drawback was that it had rather a mythological air, whereas Mather and his work were passionately contemporaneous. But you couldn't prevent Cynthia from looking like a goddess of plenty, to save your life, and the little girls were always so artlessly (and a little scantily) dressed, that, with their eager faces and flowing tangle of hair, they could scarcely avoid suggesting "attendant nymphs." In short, the only objection to painting Cynthia all one's life from morning until night was that she was a shade too obviously designed for that very purpose. Her husband may not have been aware of this; but to obtain the concentration that he strove for, Ansel had to exclude a great many things from his vision. And the picture that Mather had painted as a very sign and a deliverance for him—Hyatt seemed not even to remember that he had seen.

Mather had remained in town on the July Sunday that the agent came over, and for that reason the two elder children, who sorely missed him, were softly



THE SHABBY STATELINESS OF THE NEGLECTED OLD HOUSE

singing to each other a chant of his perfections. Ansel was pottering in the studio, and Cynthia and the two babies were shelling peas in the yard with an appearance of innocent delight. The rent had been paid some time before, and Cynthia did not see why the agent's buggy should stop at the gate, or why the agent, followed by a companion, to whom she paid no attention, should so suavely present himself. He had come, however, he explained, to look at the leak in the roof, and he asked the liberty of taking the gentleman with him, who was interested in old houses, through some of the rooms. In her serene way Cynthia gave the permission and thought no more about it

So when, only two days later, the catastrophe descended, it was with unmitigated force. An envelope bearing the agent's name had so familiar and unimportant an air that Cynthia almost neglected to open it at all. But it was as well that she waited until her husband had left her; for what the agent had written was that the house was sold. . . .

But the house was *theirs!* theirs by the right of discovery, of inspired appropriation, of affectionate guardianship through all these years in which, little by little, their life had adapted itself, with such peculiar and indissoluble intimacy, to the beloved frailties of the infirm structure. Oh, in every sense it was theirs! They had never even dreamed of eviction. It might be that motors and trolleys and prosperous summer people had crept a little nearer, in the ten years that they had lived in the valley, but never so near that they had trembled for what seemed their own inviolable security, or feared any disaster more serious than that by which they were likely to be permanently menaced; for it had never yet seemed perfectly clear where the next quarter's rent was coming from. However, the agent had been

lenient; he, too, had taken it for granted that no one else was likely to fancy the neglected house.

Oddly, it was those features of the threatened sacrifice that mattered least that Cynthia, in this crisis, dwelt upon, over and over. She could have wept for thinking of the children's play-room, or of her own bed of hollyhocks. The real essence of the catastrophe she shrank from facing. Yet through her miserable brooding the reminder would now and then leap maliciously to her brain that it wasn't, after all, their beloved old house that was the indispensable thing. *It was the sycamore.*

She knew, of course, what their friends, with only half-concealed relief, would suggest to them. That the painter had already done admirable and perhaps sufficient justice to the rather restricted landscape that surrounded them. It was what Jimmy Mather, even, would say, if he were not so kind. It was, at any rate, what he would think. Only she and Ansel knew that Ansel did not wish to paint anything else. Only she and Ansel knew that when, some day, he should gain his full distinction, it would be by this serviceably familiar road. But it may have been she alone who knew—or, in some dim, shuddering fashion, feared—that the painter had arrived at a point where he had no longer any choice; that he *could* not paint anything else

It was an intensely hot morning. Ansel, blanched and bloodless, industriously painted indoors, unaware of the heat. Cynthia's physical equilibrium was so perfect that ordinarily she also was unaffected, but to-day the hot, moist breath of the earth suffocated her. She could not even do the work that awaited her, and sat motionless, with the dooming letter in her lap. Now and then one of the children would come softly up to her, with a flushed, pouting face, and beg her to pin its hair high on its head, "like a grown lady." The little girls were much alike, with eyes set far apart, and blossomy mouths and firm chins, and as their mother looked at all four of them, their fair hair bunched high, and their cotton slips falling straight from their sweet, bared necks, she was unable for a full moment to feel anything but joy.

But then the dreadful definiteness of the thing again seized and gripped her. Their lease expired in two months, they were reminded. And the new owners naturally wished to begin repairs and improvements as soon as possible, so that if by any chance it should suit the Hyatts' plans to give up the house previous to the expiration of the lease, satisfactory arrangement would be made—and so forth. Of the various disturbing intimations, that relating to "repairs and improvements" was to Cynthia a peculiarly incisive thrust. The house was so ridiculously dear to them in its frail ancientness, with its warped floors and draughty passages and rattling windows. She knew what the invaders would most promptly set about to "repair"; and how the humpy lawn, enchanting to play games upon, and the lovely, untidy vines, would be "improved."

Still, if they were driven out, it would not matter what happened afterward. But they must not be driven out, they must not!

After sitting a long time, Cynthia's head ached so that she knew she must make herself some tea. She glanced at the clock and saw that it was already one; and remembering that the children had had no luncheon, she hastily prepared some and sent for Ansel, who, as rather rarely happened, consented to join them. Half an hour later, as they were all seated at table on the back veranda, they heard an automobile stop at the front gate and steps approach the house. In their cheerful household signs of this order were always construed as the descent from heaven of a picture-buyer; and Ansel smiled wanly now, at the recollection of this frequent pleasantry.

"I'd better go out myself and meet them," he suggested—deferring always to Cynthia, just as the youngest baby did, to have his suggestion confirmed. But Cynthia at this moment had her apprehensions.

"I would rather," she said, softly, to her husband; and, to the tallest child, "Peggy, see that Father has enough to eat."

Then, with that quick, springy tread of hers, she slipped through the house, and in a moment more was face to face with a strange young man and woman. Intuition had told her plainly enough



Drawn by Elizabeth Shippen Green Half-tone plate engraved by P. A. Pettit

THE HYATTS CLUNG TO THEIR GREEN VALLEY

their errand, but she turned a gracious face of inquiry as they explained that they were Mr. and Mrs. Ludlow, and that they had ventured to come because Mr. Saunders had told them that perhaps

Cynthia experienced an astonishing access of courage at sight of the visitors' youth and embarrassment. "Oh, I understand," she said, with a cooler courtesy. "Won't you sit down?"

"I came here first without Mrs Ludlow's knowledge, even," the young man began, in a thick, ingenuous voice, "and so, of course—"

"You want her to see the house. Certainly," agreed Cynthia, still unsmiling "But while we're talking of it—will you both forgive me if I suggest that we speak a little lower? My husband knows nothing of this, and I feel it my duty to spare him as long as possible. It will be so terrible a blow to him. He is so deeply attached to the place. I fear very much the effect upon his work. . . . Where may I have the pleasure of taking you first, Mrs. Ludlow—in the house or through the garden?"

Cynthia had not a scruple. She exulted in her own advantage, in the defencelessness of her antagonists.

"Oh, but that's so distressing," murmured the young woman. "Perhaps some other time, Mrs. Hyatt. It's not imperative, of course."

"Oh, but by all means, now that you are here. You plan to make improvements, I think the agent said."

"Why—yes—if Mrs. Ludlow agrees," stammered Ludlow, blushing deeply. The tiny black mustache that was to have imparted a look of sophistication to his innocent face failed grotesquely of its intention, and his deep-blue eyes had almost a look of tears.

"Our idea was"—young Mrs. Ludlow assumed a schoolgirlish importance—"to have the architect come out immediately—"

"The—*architect?*" repeated Cynthia, in a very soft, astonished tone.

"I think perhaps we'd better defer all that, Marian," Ludlow interposed. "We didn't dream, of course, when we made our hasty plans, that we were causing pain to any one. We merely want a place in the country to run away to—"

"And the house is so very attractive as it is." The girl seconded the attempt at propitiation. "We only thought that the servants—"

"Oh, the house has abundant room for servants. We have none because we are so very poor. But of course"—she rose, with a half-smile—"painters' families are always *hoping* to be richer, and I almost believe that if Mr. Hyatt were to have another uninterrupted year—Let me show you our lovely old hall, Mrs. Ludlow."

Ansel had gone back to his work now and the children were scattered. Cynthia punctiliously showed the strangers every corner of the house, gladly as they themselves would have abridged the inspection; for the more intimate rooms, the painter's study and the children's bedrooms, were displayed with so patient an air of reproach that the unfortunate young pair felt as though they were facing naked, breathing bodies that it was shortly to be their monstrous part to slay. Under such conditions, they had cold, hurried eyes for the stately mantels and the ancient door-latches. . . . Afterward the reluctant assassins went together for a look at the garden, while Cynthia waited for them on the porch. When they returned, young Ludlow's face was pinker than ever.

"I want to say one thing before we go, Mrs. Hyatt. Mrs. Ludlow and I have talked about the house, and we feel that—I mean to say that the actual legal arrangements with the owner of the property haven't yet been carried through, and that we so much dislike to—to cause you so much inconvenience that if I can call the thing off I shall do so. And I shall let you know as soon as possible."

Cynthia accepted this proposition gravely—even quite as though it were an act of mere decency that possibly the visitors had come rather near forgetting; and for the rest of the day she was able to smile.

The next day was Saturday; and Mather's day. Cynthia watched for him, bore him off alone and told him the incredible story, relating with especial pride her tactics of the day before. But Mather, since candor was impossible, found it a matter of extraordinary difficulty either to console or to advise. Particularly as he imagined that, in so far as their threatened misfortune con-

cerned her husband, her phrases were chosen with uncharacteristic reserve. She did not tell him that she feared Ansel could not paint in a new milieu; but because she so discreetly avoided any avenue to such a suggestion, he knew her well enough to guess that it lay hidden in her mind. He was ready enough to accept her intimation that it needn't be discussed. But Cynthia was a woman, and Ansel's wife; she could explain, extenuate, the preposterous thing. Mather's secret view of the painter's limitations was, with all his fondness for Hyatt, considerably less indulgent.

Monday morning, just before Mather left, a letter came from the agent, Saunders. It was not a particularly civil letter, but Saunders had evidently been much annoyed. It set forth that Mrs. Hyatt had seemed to misunderstand the situation; that the house was as definitely sold as a house could be, and that the final papers had now been signed.

"Which means, of course," Jimmy Mather commented, "that after you had terrified the young Ludlows they went weeping to Saunders, and he very naturally told them they were sacredly bound to keep their word to him. I'm afraid, Cynthia, there isn't much hope."

"There's one chance, I think," she persisted. "They're really such sweet, simple young creatures that I could be sorry for having been cruel to them if it weren't a question of our very lives. As it is—they have money, they can buy themselves other houses. So what I should like you to do, Jimmy, is to hunt up Mr. Ludlow in town and tell him that he's doing a dreadful thing, because we are too nice to be turned out, and ask him to rent his place to us instead of living in it himself Then he can simply regard it as an investment. And we do pay rent now and then."

Jimmy looked at Cynthia. If his own secret sentiment for her ever dominated him, it was at that moment. "Why, of course—I'll do it," he said; then kissed the children all around and fled.

Two days later he sent the following discouraging news:

"DEAR CYNTHIA,—You charmed and frightened the Ludlows horribly. But they now definitely own the house. And besides, other influences that I can't put my finger on have been at work. Then there's a flinty streak in the girl. Ludlow, I believe, would give you the house outright and tell you to make yourselves at home there forever; but his wife won't quite give way, now that she's thought it over. I spent an afternoon with them, and I know you'll believe I did my best."

No other recourse being apparent, Cynthia told her husband of their approaching doom. He said little, but after that she noticed that he did not touch his brushes, but sat all day in his studio as if stricken, with his unfinished canvases all about him. And the children wandered about for several days like little ghosts, holding their rag dolls to their breasts and looking reproachfully at Cynthia as if she, always so amply maternal and protecting, might have spared them *this!* Any effort on the Hyatts' part to transplant themselves was, however, so long delayed that it was finally Mather who, after a conscientious search, succeeded in finding a cottage that would keep them a great deal warmer and more comfortable, he earnestly insisted, than they had ever been before. Besides, the rent was less. And near by there was a stunning stretch of marsh that would coax the paint right out of the tube. Ansel nodded his head gravely when he heard this; but he refused to go and look at the new home.

During the last week of September the evicted family dismally trailed away; and by the first of October the regenerating army was in occupation—plumbers, carpenters, electricians, gardeners, in and out door decorators and embellishers of every approved description. Of the Hyatts' long tenancy all but a few rather pitiful traces were obliterated almost in a day. A wooden horse that had lost a rocker lay morosely on the lawn; and on the edge of the driveway a disintegrating easel stood awaiting its moment of collapse. The house itself, hollow and staring-eyed, regarded its invaders with the incredulous dismay of a plain elderly woman upon whom the attentions of a masseuse and hair-dresser have for the first time been forced. And behind, on the hill, so far unnoticed by the professional renovators, the sycamore shiv-

ered through the length of its scarred limbs, yet passively yielded its last decent covering of leaves to the wind's selfish insistence.

Mather, who had conscientiously been on hand to supervise the Hyatts' removal, would distinctly have enjoyed his task if he hadn't found it necessary to conceal his satisfaction. It was so plain to him that the influences of the house in the valley had been unwholesome, pernicious even. The cottage he had found for them was at least a civilized shelter. Yet those were not views to be expressed in face of the utter misery of the six Hyatts.

The children, it is true, readjusted themselves after a little, and the older ones in particular were somewhat blinded to their misfortune by the novel and rapturous experience of having neighbor children to play with. But poor Cynthia had found no analogous distraction. The fear that had in the summer tormented her at intervals was now become her constant companion. Or rather, it could scarcely longer be described as a fear. It had been a certainty long before the day that Ansel had come to her, in a queer, bewildered way, and begged her, like a child, to give him something to do—something to occupy and distract him. He did not rave against the thing that had befallen him. His vague, gentle eyes looked just beyond Cynthia, as they always did, as he told her in a flat voice, without any emphasis, that he could not paint any more. He had tried and cut the canvases in pieces. It was true that there were lovely bits all about, as Mather had said. Let Mather paint them. Mather had a sane eye and a sure hand, there was no doubt of that. And he was a dear fellow. But there were things he didn't understand. He had never, after all, quite gotten the spirit of the old house in the valley; and he had never understood the peculiar atmospheres that Ansel himself had so faithfully studied there—or the old sycamore.

With this the silence was broken. They began to speak of the sycamore as naturally as though for months they had not been painfully avoiding it. Afterward, though their situation may have been no less forlorn and desperate in itself, it was distinctly easier to bear. And when, the following week, Mather came out with a fresh opportunity for Ansel to teach, Cynthia made no objection to her husband's knowing of it.

"I'll agree to it for a little," she confided to Mather from her arrogant poverty, "but later on I'm going to uproot the sycamore by night and bring it over here, or I'm going to buy an eighth of an acre from the Ludlows and let Ansel live on it. It's got to be, Jimmy. In some way or other, he's got to recover his tree." For Mather, who certainly deserved the confidence, had at last been given a wifely version of the extraordinary truth.

Ansel, when the offer was made to him, agreed to begin teaching on the first of January. But neither he nor Cynthia appeared in the least influenced by the profit that would come from it. The faithful Mather suddenly wondered if, after all, he had ever done full justice to the unworldly pair.

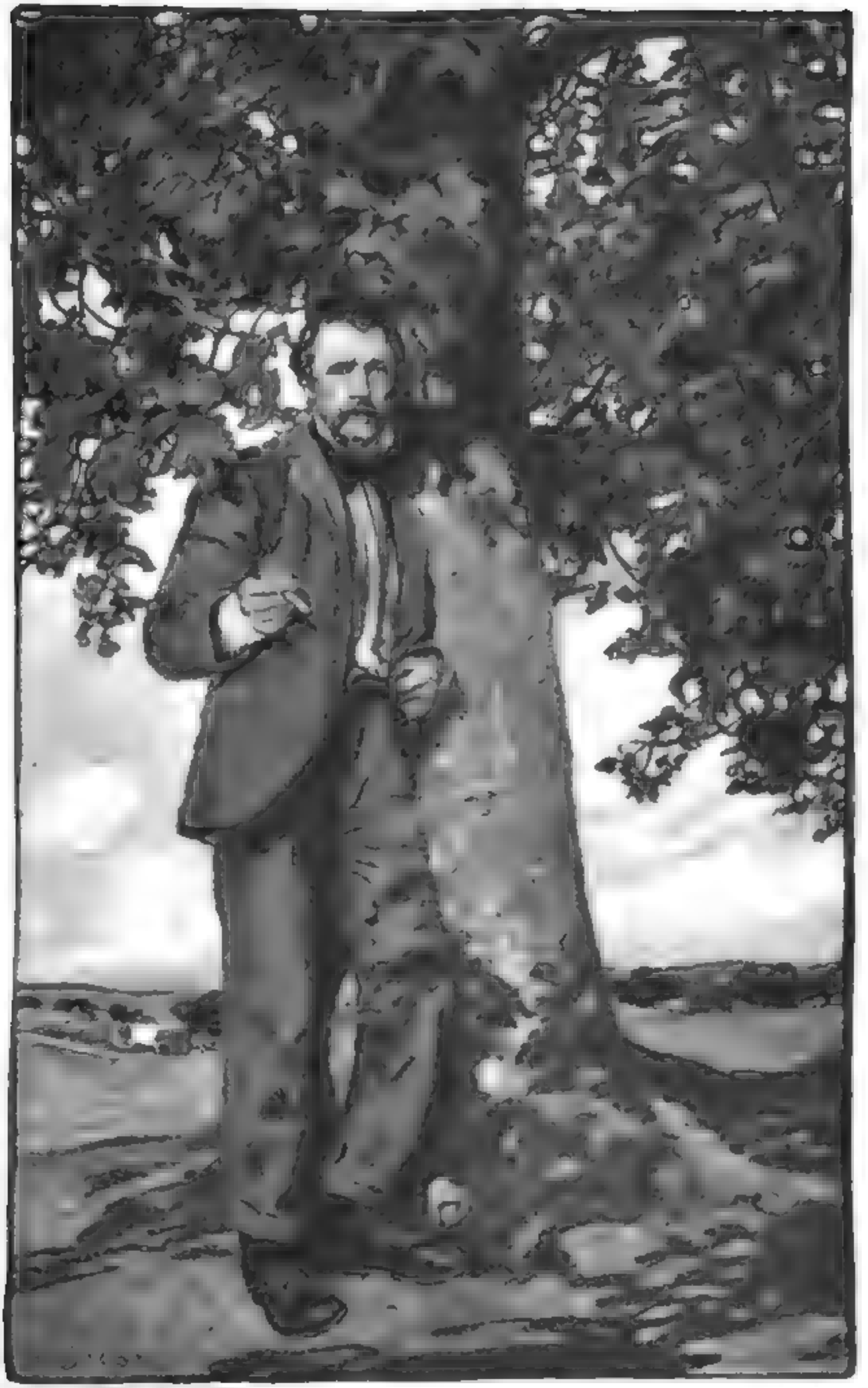
It was already the middle of December when, on an unprecedented Wednesday, Mather again arrived from town. Ansel met him at the door, and Cynthia, who had just come from putting the last baby to bed, stood radiant and welcoming on the staircase. Their old friend stood for a moment, smiling. "I have good news for you," he then quietly remarked. "You can go back to the old house."

"Jimmy, I've just been waiting! I knew, I knew it would come!" Cynthia cried, exultantly. But Ansel stood silent and pale. Mather's overcoat was affectionately stripped from him and he was drawn in to sit by an open fire. But the one great fact that he had brought was so deliriously satisfying that it was five minutes before Cynthia demanded the story that lay behind.

Mather spoke in a somewhat puzzled voice. "Why, it's through Ludlow, of course," he began. "He came into the studio to-day and asked me if I would take a message to you. He said he knew you so slightly he wasn't quite sure how you'd take it. So he thought he'd let me stand fire instead—"

"Dear Jimmy!" beamed Cynthia.

"I told him I was just the man for that and to go ahead. So he said that he and his wife are going to Europe next week. That they're keen for an Italian



IT WAS THE FIRST SUBJECT THAT HE HAD CHOSEN—THE SYCAMORE

winter, and he didn't believe they would ever go back to the house in the valley, anyway. They've put in half a dozen bath-rooms, I imagine, from what he said, and set out a great many triangular patches of silly shrubs, but they're willing to throw all that in and rent the house for the same price as before. Not that it matters to them whether they have a tenant or not, but he remembered how you felt about leaving, Cynthia—and so he wishes that you have an opportunity to return if you care to."

"Oh, *when!*" breathed Cynthia.

"To-morrow, if you like."

"How wonderful!" she exclaimed, sinking back in her chair. In a few moments she had seemed to recover the bloom that the last months had taken from her. "But do you understand it, Jimmy? Why they are going, I mean?"

Mather hitched uncomfortably in his chair. "Yes; Ludlow explained everything. He's such a curiously innocent, outspoken chap—didn't you think, Cynthia? But, good Lord! it's an unaccountable story. Unaccountable, I mean, because they're certainly an average pair—not the fanciful, imaginative sort. . . . But what their story practically amounts to is that the house is haunted."

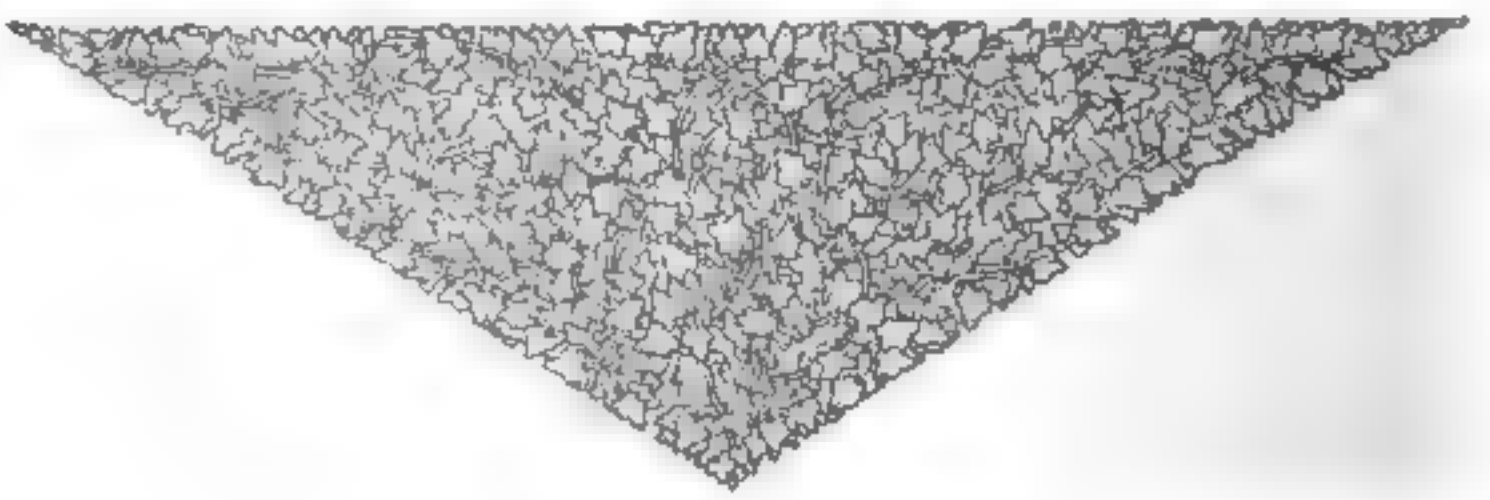
"Not our dear old house! But that's horrible and absurd of them!" Cynthia blazed, in defence of the place that she loved.

"He didn't say just that." Mather paused. "In fact, it's difficult to recall just what words he did use, for he used a good many and they came rather at haphazard. It isn't, however, that they've seen ghosts. But the place seems forlorn and uncomfortable. He said, I think, that they had felt unhappy presences about, or something of the sort. . . . But of course that's nonsense. Anyhow, the place keeps them at a distance. It's on its dignity with them. It's as much as it will do to let them in the door, so far as I can make out, and it harasses them at night and fusses them generally. In short, they're young, cheerful people, who want to be gay, and the house won't let them. I'd leave it if I were they, wouldn't you?"

Mather's affected lightness did not deceive Cynthia. "Jimmy, you haven't told us everything!" she challenged.

"Oh, practically everything," he answered, slowly, leaning forward to poke the fire. "There's one odd thing, though. Ludlow said they might have stood the general gloom that pervaded the place, if it hadn't been for one thing that acutely distressed them. . . . You remember your sycamore, Ansel? It's that tree that seems to have bothered them. He said it stood there in such a sinister, menacing way. And unfortunately they had to see it from all the rooms in the house that they liked best. It seemed to have an unpleasant way of telling them that they didn't belong there. You can't wonder that it got on their nerves. They would have cut it down, he said—but they didn't dare to. In fact, they were deathly afraid of it. So—the end of it is that the tree is there, and they are out—and you're at liberty to move in whenever you like."

Cynthia laid her hand on her husband's arm. "After all, it's not so strange—is it, Ansel? I can understand it all so well now. I only wonder that we did not *know* it would happen!"



The Intercessor

By May Sinclair

I

They had told him that he couldn't miss it. There wasn't another house near it for a good mile. He knew where the bridle-path from the hill road struck the lane in the Bottom. It was down there, with a clump of ash-trees close up against the back of it, trying to hide it.

Garvin followed the path. It went straight over the slope of the fields, hemmed in by stone walls, low and loose piled, part of the enormous network of stone flung across the north country to the foot of the fells.

At the end of the last field a wild plum-tree stood half-naked on a hillock and pointed at the house. All that Garvin could see was a bald gable-end pitched among the ash-trees. It was black grey, like ash bark drenched with rain.

It stood, he now saw, in a little orchard of dead trees, shut in from the fields by walls, low and loose piled, a plot so small that it showed like a loop in a mesh of the stone network.

As he approached the place he had the distinct thrill of fascination that seized him always in the presence of old things.

Garvin was by nature and profession a hunter of old things, of old houses, old churches, old ways and superstitions. He had had his nose in a hundred parish registers, sifting the dust of oblivion for a clue to some forgotten family. He was gifted with an implacable persistence in following up a trail, a terrible and untiring industry in minute research. His almost legal precision had served him well when he left an estate agent's office in Pall Mall to work for the Blackadders on their County History.

The Blackadder enterprise was so vast that Garvin in his operations was a mere fly-wheel of the machinery. But it fired him; it gave him scope. As an estate agent, selling land for building lots, Garvin had done violence to his genius. The dream of Garvin and his passion was for wild open stretches, everlastingly unbuilt on, for moors and fells, for all places that have kept the secret and the memory of the ancient earth. It was this queer, half-savage streak in the respectable Garvin that marked him as *the* man for the Craven country.

He had travelled the district all summer, working up his notes at night in small humble hotels and wayside inns. But when it came to the actual writing of his section, Garvin had taken rooms in a village in Craven. He had insisted on two things only when he took them, that the house must be old and that there must be no children in it. That was in

July. And before August other lodgers had come and had brought many children. Garvin was driven out. He said he *must* have a place to himself, and was told, fairly and squarely, in broad Yorkshire, that he couldn't have it; leastways, not in August. If he wasn't satisfied where he was, he could go to Falshaw's in the Bottom. Likely enough he'd have it to himself there as much as he wanted.

Garvin ignored the hint of perdition. He inquired placably if Falshaw's was an old place, and was told that it was "old enough." He asked also whether at Falshaw's there would be any children. No (this time it was palpable, the sidelong, sinister intention), there wouldn't be; leastways not in August nor yet September—if all went well with Falshaw's wife. Garvin judged that the state of Falshaw's wife had acted somehow as a deterrent to tourists. It had kept Falshaw's empty. That was good. Anyhow he thought he'd risk it.

It was early evening in the first week of August that he set out for the house in the Bottom.

It didn't strike him (for the approach was sideways through a little gate in the low wall), it didn't strike him all at once that the house was not "old enough." But it struck him very sharply as he entered and took in, slant-ways, its bare rectangular front. So far from being old enough (for Garvin) it was not old at all, if you went by years. He had given it about a hundred at sight, when he came upon its date graved above the lintel of its door: 1800, and the initials of its founder: E. F.

If you went by years—but this gaunt and naked thing had grown old before its years. It wore the look of calamity, of terrible and unforgetting and unforgotten age. What it did was to throw back its century into some tract of dark and savage time.

He stepped back a few paces to get a better look at it. The unsheltered door stood open; its flagged passage, flush with the ground outside it, showed like a continuation of the orchard path. At the further gable-end its wall was broken half-way by the roof of a pent-house. A clump of elder bushes here were the only green and living things about the place. It stood before Garvin, dark and repellent in its nakedness, built from floor to roof of that bleak stone that abhors the sun, that blackens under rain. The light of the August evening was grey round it; the heat of the August day lived only in the rank smell of the elder bushes by the pent-house wall. It seemed to Garvin that the soul of eighteen hundred hung about him in the smell of the elder bushes. He found it in the blurred gleam of the five windows, deep set and narrow, that looked out on the orchard of dead trees. Garvin's delicate sense of time was shaken under their poignant, impenetrable stare, so that the figures 1800 troubled him, stirred in him the innermost thrill of his passion for the past.

He knocked with his stick on the open door. The sounds struck short and hard. Nobody answered. Garvin took another look at the house. The wall-space to the left of the threshold was narrow and had but one window, which he had passed as he entered. The long, two-windowed wall on the right bounded the house place. Garvin saw

through the open door that this interior was diminished by two wooden partitions, one of which formed the passage, the other shut off the staircase at the back. The door at the end of the passage was closed. So was the door on his left, leading into the small room he had passed. The door in the partition on his right stood ajar, so that when he knocked again he heard the loud scraping of a chair on the stone floor. Somebody had got up and was probably listening there, but nobody came. He knocked again on the inner door imperiously.

This time he heard footsteps. They advanced heavily to the door and paused there. The door swung to with a click of the latch and the footsteps retreated. They trailed off somewhere into the depths of the house to the back. Somebody called out there to somebody else, " Onny ! Onny ! " and Garvin waited.

Some moments passed before the door at the end of the passage (the door into the backyard) opened, and a girl, whom he took to be Anny, came to him. She was a young girl, sturdy and full-blown in the body, florid and fair in the face ; in all commonplace and a little coarse. She came heavily, with no sign of interest or of haste, but staring at Garvin with her thick grey eyes.

He asked if he could have rooms. Anny didn't know, she was sure.

Would she be good enough to find out ?

She didn't know. He could find out himself. Ooncle was in the tool-shed.

With more good-will than her speech indicated she led the way to the shed under the elder bushes.

There was no one there. Anny now reckoned that Ooncle would be in the mist-house.

A gate in the wall behind the elder bushes opened into the mist-house yard. Falshaw was alone there, pitching dung from the cow-shed. At the girl's call he came forward, leaning on his pitchfork. He was a big man, thick in the girth, and fair like his niece, and florid. Garvin reckoned his age at fifty or thereabouts. For in his body, built for power, the muscles had begun to slacken ; it was sunken in its secret foundations. Garvin supposed that this was because of Falshaw's age. What baffled him was the contradiction between Falshaw's face and its expression. It was natural that Falshaw should grow old ; but what had Falshaw done that his face, formed by nature in an hour of genial grossness, should have all its contours tortured to that look of irremediable gloom ?

The gloom did not lift as the big man slouched nearer, and (contemptuous of the stranger's greeting) inquired what Garvin wanted. His manner intimated that whatever it was Garvin would probably have to want it.

As to whether Garvin could put up at Falshaw's, Falshaw, like his niece, didn't know, he was sure. It depended upon whether the missus could " put oop " with Garvin.

Garvin, suddenly remembering what he had heard about Falshaw's wife, protested that his requirements would be slight. Falshaw did not know about that either, he was sure ; but he reckoned that Garvin

would have to ask the missus. The missus was "oop there," in the house.

He was about to leave Garvin to deal with the situation when he seemed to think better of it, and to have decided that, after all, he would see him through. All this time he had clung to his pitchfork. He now planted it firmly in the earth to await his return. He seemed to leave it with reluctance and regret.

The girl Anny smiled as if she was pleased at the turn affairs were taking. Garvin thought he saw hope for himself in Anny's smile.

As they reached the door that had been shut against Garvin, Falshaw drew himself up and squared his shoulders with a tightening of all his muscles. He seemed to take the young man under his protection with an air of dogged courage in seeing him through. It struck Garvin then that Falshaw was afraid of his wife.

She sat in twilight and slant-wise from the doorway, so that she had her back both to them and to the light. The sound of the lifted latch had been answered by a loud and sudden scraping of her chair; it was like a shriek of fright. She rose as Garvin entered, and turned, as if she suffered the impulse of the pregnant woman to hide herself.

He approached her, uttering some such soft and inarticulate sound as he would have used to soothe a shy animal. As she swung heavily round and faced him he saw that he was likely to be mistaken as to Mrs. Falshaw's impulses. Otherwise he would have said that it was she who was afraid. But whatever her instinct was, fear or hostility, it already was submerged in the profound apathy of her gloom.

For the expression on Falshaw's face was a mere shadow fallen on it from his wife's face, where gloom and heaviness had entered into the substance of the flesh and the structure of the bone. Gloom was in the very fibre of her hair, a dull black, rusted.

It was Falshaw, with his air of protection, who put it to her whether it would be possible for them to take Garvin in.

"Ya knaw how *thot'll* end," said she significantly.

Things had happened, then, at Falshaw's. The gloom on Falshaw's face renewed Garvin's impression that Falshaw, perhaps, on account of these things, was afraid of his wife. He looked from her to his niece Anny, who stood leaning awkwardly against the dresser and twisting and untwisting a corner of her apron. There was a queer, half-frightened, half-sullen look on her face. And Garvin received a further impression, that the things that had happened at Falshaw's were connected unpleasantly with Falshaw's niece. It might well be. The girl was coarse.

By way of establishing his own incorruptibly moral character, Garvin drew a portrait of himself as a respectable, intellectual dry-as-dust, alien to human interests and emotions, intolerant of the society of his kind. So much so that he was obliged to stipulate that wherever he lodged there must be no other lodgers, and no children.

"There'll be no other lodgers. You can depend on thot," said Falshaw.

"And—no children?"

The girl Anny stirred uneasily. Her face, florid a second ago, was white as Garvin looked at it. She hid her hands in her apron, turned on her heel abruptly, and left the room.

Then Garvin was sure that he knew. *That* was the trouble in the house. Falshaw's eyes followed his niece as she went out. There was some tenderness in the gross man, and plainly he was sorry for the girl. But his wife's face had tightened; it had grown even more forbidding than it had been. The woman, Garvin judged, had been hard on Anny. He could see Anny being ground under that nether millstone.

Of course they would resent his touching on the sore point, but it happened to be the point on which Garvin himself was uneasy, and he really had to settle it. He approached it gently and with some confusion.

"I was told——" he began, and hesitated.

"What were ya told?" said Falshaw.

"Why—that there weren't any."

"Speak oop. Ah doan' understond ya."

Garvin plunged. "I mean—any children. I say, you know, there aren't any, really, are there?" He plunged deeper. "I mean, of course, in the house." And deeper still. "I mean—at present."

"There's noa fear o' thot—here."

It was Falshaw's wife who spoke.

It was as if the heart of her gloom had suddenly found utterance. Silence followed it.

They had seated themselves round the deep open hearth-place, Garvin on the settle facing Mrs. Falshaw, and Falshaw in the middle facing his hearth. His attitude indicated that he was seeing Garvin through, not because he liked him or approved of him, but as a simple matter of justice between man and man.

He did not look at Garvin when he spoke to him. He had not looked straight at him since he had brought him into the house. He seemed unable to face another man fairly and squarely in the presence of his wife. That might be, Garvin supposed, either because he was afraid of her or because his consciousness of approaching fatherhood had made him shy. Now, as his wife spoke, he turned on Garvin a dumb and poignant look that besought his pity and his comprehension. It was as if he had said, "You see what's wrong with her"; as if he were letting him into the secret of her malady, of the gloom that hung about them both. And Garvin understood that the unfortunate woman had fallen into some melancholy incidental to her state. She had got it into her head that the unborn thing had died within her or would die. A curse was on her. She would never be the mother of a living child.

She sat there, leaning forward, propping her weight with hands planted on her thighs, and staring at the hearth, a creature bowed and stupefied

with her burden. Her husband leaned forward too, staring as she stared, moved to a like attitude by sympathy. He pushed out his loose lips from time to time, as if he said, "That's how it takes her. That's how it takes her."

Garvin's delicacy prompted him to inquire whether it would be inconvenient for Mrs. Falshaw to take him in.

At this innocent query Falshaw actually smiled. It was the most extraordinary smile. Without altering the expression of his face it went quivering through his whole vast bulk, as if his body were invaded by a malign mirth. It became articulate.

"We woan't," said Falshaw, "put *ourselves* out for anybody."

Garvin took this as an intimation in the northern manner that he was to consider himself at home.

Falshaw now approached his wife so near as to reckon that they could let the yoong mon have the parlour and the back bedroom, and Mrs. Falshaw replied from the depths of her apathy that he, Falshaw, could do as he liked.

A brief inspection showed Garvin that his quarters, though small, were incomparably clean. He moved into them in the afternoon of the next day.

He was pleased with the cool stone-flagged parlour. Its narrow walls concentrated the light in a clear equable stream on his table under the window. He ranged his books on the top of the low cupboard that flanked the fireplace; and, if the room was still cold and strange to him, he had only to look at them to feel instantly at home. Nobody interfered with him.

It was his bedroom that made him realise that Falshaw had meant what he said. They weren't going to put themselves out for anybody, not they. Garvin's expert eye had measured the resources of the house, and he knew that he had got the worst bedroom in it. It was such a room as is only given to a servant even in houses like the Falshaws'. And nobody had turned out of it for him. With all its cleanness, it had the musty smell of long disuse. Garvin, however, preferred this smell to any kindred sign that might suggest recent habitation. Apart from its appearance and the smell, the room inspired him with a profound discomfort and distrust. He prowled about in it for half an hour, searching in vain for possible sources of this feeling.

So little did the Falshaws put themselves out that nobody came upstairs to tell the lodger that his tea was waiting for him in the parlour. He drank it lukewarm and stewed to an abominable blackness. A delicious scent of home-baked bread and hot girdle-cakes came from the Falshaws' kitchen, while Garvin sniffed suspicion at a sour loaf and a slab of salt butter from the village shop Bacon from the shop appeared at his supper, its rankness intensified by a savour of hot stew wafted through the doorway. He ventured to ask Anny if he couldn't have some of the new bread he had smelt baking, and was told that they only baked once a week for themselves. The idea seemed to be that any food cooked

by the Falshaws was sacred to the tribe. He wouldn't be allowed to eat it.

But Garvin was ready to endure any privation of mere appetite in the satisfaction of his passion for peace, and peace (he could feel it) was what he had found at Falshaw's.

Before going to bed he had assured himself that he had his side of the house entirely to himself. He found out that the girl Anny slept with Mrs. Falshaw in the large front room over the kitchen. He supposed that this arrangement was unavoidable if they wanted to keep the young minx out of harm's way. As for Falshaw, he was lodged in a commodious chamber next his wife's, covering both the parlour and the passage. Garvin's room was certainly not commodious. The roof of the house, low and short on the front of it, long and steep-pitched on the back, dwarfed Garvin's room to the proportions of a garret. The space on this side of the house was further taken up by a landing, lighted through a small pane in the slope of the roof.

The doors of the three rooms opened on to the landing. There was also, at the top of a short stair, a fourth door, opposite Garvin's. This door was locked (Garvin in his fastidious curiosity had tried it). But the wall, flanking the well of the staircase, reassured him. There could be no width behind it for anything bigger than a box room. Garvin was certain of his peace.

Oh, certain. At evening an almost unnatural stillness had fallen on the place. It was in the house, in the orchard, and in the yard down there under the ash-trees. It deepened with each hour of the night. He was almost oppressed with his sense of it as he lay in bed, waiting for the sleep which he knew would be shy of visiting him in his strange quarters.

He would have had a better chance—as far as sleeping went—if there *had* been some noise about; some noise, that was to say, outside his own body. For in the silence, Garvin's body, with all its pulses, had become a centre of intolerable clamour.

Garvin's body grew quiet. He was deliciously, delicately aware of the approach of sleep, of sleep entering his veins, of sleep and silence and oblivion flooding his brain, his heart, submerging him, or just submerging, when, with a terrible vain resistance and resentment, he found himself being drawn out of it.

What amazed him as he came up was the slenderness of the thread that drew him, a sound so fragile, so thin, that he was almost unaware of it as sound. His resentment flamed to indignation as the thing became audible and recognisable, distinctly recognisable, as the crying of a child.

It came from one of the upper rooms: it was hardly a crying, a sobbing, a whimpering rather, muffled by closed doors. The wonder was how it could have waked him; the sound was so distant, so smothered, so inarticulate.

It went on for a long time, and Garvin could not say whether it ceased or whether he slept through it. He knew he did sleep.

THE INTERCESSOR

III

In the morning he was aware that, as the victim of their deception, he was more interesting to the Falshaws than he had been overnight. Returning from a stroll before breakfast, he found Mrs. Falshaw standing in the door of the house and watching him. She slunk away at his approach and shut the kitchen door between them. Falshaw, encountered in the passage, eyed him stealthily with suspicion that turned at close quarters to defiance, as much as to say that, if Garvin was up to anything, he, Falshaw, was ready for him.

Garvin would have dealt with Falshaw then and there but for the presence of the girl Anny, who was stationed in the doorway of the parlour, watching also. She lingered in her waiting on him, and he discerned in her thick eyes a vague animal terror, half-spiritualised by an unspoken, an unspeakable appeal. It was borne in on him that her change of attitude was somehow connected with the disturbance of the night. He gathered from it that if her fear could have spoken it would have besought him to spare her, to say nothing.

His annoyance was accompanied by an inward shrug of cynical comprehension. Nothing more likely, said Garvin in his shrewdness, than that Anny should have borne a child, and that her child should be a shame and a burden to the Falshaws. They couldn't have resented it more than he did; but he meant to wait and see the extent of the nuisance before he made his protest.

All day the inviolate stillness of his solitude was a reproach to the resentment that he felt. The child was kept quiet, smuggled away somewhere out of sight.

But that night and the next night he heard it. And no wonder. He had found that its crying came from the small garret facing his, where apparently it was locked in and left to sleep alone.

It had its trick of waking at the same hour. The crying would begin about eleven and go on till past midnight. There was no petulance in it and no anger; it had all the qualities of a young child's cry, except the carnal dissonances and violences. The grief it uttered was too profound and too persistent, and, as it were, too pure; it knew none of the hot-blooded throes, the strangulated pauses, the lacerating resurgences of passion. At times it was shrill, unbroken, irremediable; at times it was no more than a sad sobbing and whimpering, stifled, Garvin gathered, under the bedclothes. He lay and listened to it till he knew all its changes and inflections, its languors and wearinesses, its piteous crescendos and amazements, as of a creature malignly re-created, born again to its mysterious, immitigable suffering.

As he never slept until it had ceased, Garvin was qualified to witness to the Falshaws' abominable neglect. Nobody came near the poor little wretch to comfort it. It was probably frightened there all by itself. The mere sound of the crying wouldn't have kept him awake but for his pity for the helpless thing that made it. In the daytime he found himself thinking about it. He couldn't get away from the thought of it.

He worried over it. He had the horrible idea that the child suffered on his account; that the Falshaws kept it locked up in the garret in the daytime that it might be out of the lodger's way. As this theory was inconsistent with their allowing it to keep the lodger awake at night, he could only suppose that the Falshaws were as indifferent to its suffering as to his. They had more than one devil in their blood. Likely enough, it was the devil of Puritanism that made the man and woman cruel to the child of Anny's sin.

But the girl herself?

He had the very worst opinion of the girl Anny. He was convinced that Anny, and not Mrs. Falshaw, was the mother of the child. Not that he was inclined to think hardly of the girl for having it. What he couldn't stand was her behaviour to it now that she had had it. There was nothing very intimately revealing in Anny's heavy, full-blown face; but Garvin had judged her gross. He saw her now sinning grossly, for the sin's sake, without any grace of tenderness. She was the kind predestined to go wrong. She lacked the intelligence that might have kept her straight. He could see her going to meet her sin half-way, slowly, without any beating of the heart, finding the way by some dull instinct older than her soul.

He was obliged to admit that the poor thing had at any rate let *him* alone. Probably her instinct sufficed to tell her that he was not her prey. But he had gathered that she was responsible for the Falshaws' unwillingness to take him in; and it was plain enough that they kept a sharp look-out on her. He knew their habits now. He knew, for instance, that Falshaw accompanied his niece on any errand undertaken after dark. Indoors they wouldn't trust her out of their sight a minute on his side of the house. Now he came to think of it, he had never once seen her there in the hours of dusk and dark; he had never found her alone in his room at any hour. Mrs. Falshaw was always hovering somewhere near; her forbidding eye was for ever on the poor girl as she swept and scoured.

This austerity of the Falshaws had its inconveniences for Garvin. He didn't expect a tidy room at bed-time, or hot water, or sheets invitingly turned down. But nobody seemed to think of closing the window when the evening mists came on and settled on his bed, or when the rain beat in and made it damp.

He determined to deal with Anny.

He dealt with her on the morning after his third bad night.

"Look here," he said; "why don't you keep that child quiet?"

Her gross colour fled. And yet she faced him.

"You've heard her, sir?"

"Of course I've heard her."

Her thick eyes stared at him. They were curiously without shame.

"You don't look as if you had," she said.

That and her stare staggered him. Before he could answer her she had given utterance to a still more amazing thing.

"You needn't go," she said. "She won't hurt you."

With that she left him.

IV

That night, his fourth, Garvin found that his nerves were growing so increasingly, so frightfully sensitive to sound that the crying seemed to come from the threshold of his door, from his bedside, from his pillow. It got from his nerves into his dreams, and he woke with the sense of a child's body pressed to his body, the palms of its hands upon his breast, its face hidden against his side, and the vibration of its sobbing above his heart. The thing passed, with a fainter, shivering, vanishing vibration which he felt as somehow external to himself.

He sat up, wideawake, and listened. The crying had ceased. His nerves were all right again.

He supposed he'd have (as Falshaw would have said) to put up with it. He could, after all, reckon on six or seven hours' good sleep, and in the daytime the poor little thing was quiet enough in all conscience. He couldn't very well resent it.

And yet he did resent it. He resented the cruelty of it. So much so that he spoke about it to Mackinnon, the doctor, whose acquaintance he had made when he was lodging up in the village. Mackinnon had called at the house in the Bottom to see how Mrs. Falshaw was getting on. Garvin lay in wait for him and asked him if he couldn't do something. He, Garvin, couldn't stand it.

The doctor was a little Highlander, red haired, fiery, and shrewd. He looked shrewdly at Garvin and told him that if he couldn't stand *that* his nerves must be in an awful state. And he took him off with him in his motor on a long round that swept the district.

That evening, Garvin, drowsed with the wind of speed, refused the solicitations of the County History and went to bed before ten.

He was in the act of undressing when he heard the child cry.

The sobbing whimper was no longer stifled under bed-clothes; it sounded distinctly from the open landing. Garvin unlatched his door and looked out.

At this hour of the newly risen moon there was light on the landing like a grey day. He saw a girl child standing on the garret stair. It had on a short nightgown that showed its naked feet. It was clinging to the rail with one hand.

Its face was so small, so shrunken and so bleached, that at first its actual features were indistinct to him. What *was* distinct, appallingly distinct, was the look it had; a look not to be imagined or defined, and thinkable only as a cry, an agony, made visible.

The child stood there long enough to fix on him its look. At the same time it seemed so withdrawn in the secret of its suffering as to be unaware of him.

It descended the stair, went close past him, and crossed the landing to the women's room.

Now on these hot August nights the door was left half-open, leaving a wide passage way into the room. Garvin could see it. He looked for

the child to go in where its mother lay. Instead of going in it stood there motionless as if it kept watch.

Then all at once it began crying, crying and beating on the open door with its tenuous hands, beating and pushing as against a door closed and locked.

It was then that Garvin knew.

The creature gave up its efforts at last and turned from the door sobbing. Garvin could not see its face now, for it had raised its arms and held them across its forehead with the backs of the hands pressed against its weeping eyes. Thus blinded, it made its way across the landing towards Garvin's door, and passed by him, still unaware, into his room.

He went in and shut-to the door. The child was standing by the foot of the bed as if it watched somebody who slept there. It stayed, watching, while Garvin undressed and got into bed. Then—Garvin was not frightened nor even surprised at what happened then; he seemed to have expected it—the little creature climbed up the bedside and crept in beside him. He felt, flesh to flesh, its body pressed to his body, the palms of its hands upon his breast, and its face hidden against his side.

V

He knew now what he was in for; he knew what was the matter with house; he knew its secret, the source of what, so far as *he* went, he could only call its fascination. For he could swear to his own state of mind—he was *not* afraid.

On one point only he was uncertain. He did not yet know whether he were alone or not in his experience, whether the Falshaws knew what he knew, and whether it was the things that they knew, that they had heard and seen, their experiences, which accounted for their abiding gloom. Neither they nor anybody else had told him precisely what he would be in for if he insisted on staying at Falshaw's; but there had been (he remembered now) a rather sinister inflection laid on certain words that had been said to him.

They came back to him now. He could have very little doubt that the place had a sinister reputation, and that the Falshaws knew it. He had not understood it at the time, because his mind had been so misled by Falshaw's bodily grossness that it could only form a gross conception of the trouble of the house, of the things that, as they had intimated to him, had happened there. Poor Garvin profoundly repented the infamy of some of his suspicions, those relating to the girl Anny.

He found on the morning of his experience that Falshaw's attitude, like his own, had changed somewhat overnight. The gross man was still suspicious (like Garvin), but there was more solicitude than hostility in his suspicion. He watched Garvin as if he thought he were going to be ill, as if he knew and were on the look out for the symptoms of his malady.

Ill or not (he certainly felt all right), Garvin was an object of even greater interest to his friend Mackinnon. The doctor called that evening with the evident intention of cheering him up. Garvin felt that Mackinnon was on the look out for something too. They talked about the

County History and Garvin's part in it, which Mackinnon plainly regarded as conferring lustre upon Garvin. Incidentally he put him in the way of much valuable information, for the doctor knew something (sometimes he knew a great deal) about each house and its family within thirty miles round.

In the pauses of the conversation they could hear Falshaw talking to his wife. The two were sitting up late, and he seemed to be arguing with her.

It was eleven o'clock before Mackinnon went. The clank of the gate behind him was instantly followed by the sound of Mrs. Falshaw's chair scraping on the stone flags of the kitchen and by Falshaw's fist knocking upon Garvin's door.

He was almost respectful as he stood looming before Garvin's writing-table.

"Mr. Garvin," he began, "ah've soommat to saay to you. If you doan't loike what you've found you'd better goa. There's noa call for you to give th' 'ouse a bod naame. There's too mooch been saaid. Ah'm dommed if ah'll put oop with it."

"I know the worst," said Garvin quietly, "and *I* can put up with it. How do you know what your next lodger 'll do—or say?"

Falshaw's huge bulk seemed to sway there as he placed his balled fists on the table for support. He was silent.

"Mr. Falshaw, I don't know how much you know, or what—but if it happens to be what I know——"

"Ah doan't saay as 'tisn't. What ah saay is that there's noa call for you to stomach it. You can goa."

"I don't want to go. Why should I?"

"You doan't?" He peered at him.

"Of course not."

"Then, sir" (it was the first time that Falshaw had called him "sir"), "you bean't afeard?"

"No more, Mr. Falshaw, than you are yourself."

"Ah've noa cause to be afeard. Ah knaw nothing."

A tremor passed through him as from some centre stirred by utterance. His face quivered. Its brute heaviness was redeemed for a moment by some inscrutable pathos. It was impossible to say whether Falshaw deplored his ignorance or repudiated knowledge.

On the whole, Garvin inclined to think that he *was* alone in his experience.

VI

Three days passed. Night after night Garvin witnessed the same supernatural event.

His senses were now so perfectly adjusted to his experience that he no longer thought of it as supernatural. What struck him as marvellous was the change it worked in the Falshaws now that they knew he had it. He was evidently set apart, consecrated by his experience. He had become for them an object of extraordinary respect—he would almost have said

of affection. Whereas they had once disregarded his wishes and treated his little likings and dislikings with an almost insolent contempt, now, everything that he had ever asked for, that he had ever wanted without asking for, was remembered and provided. The fresh home-made bread that he had coveted appeared daily at his table; his meals had a savour and variety which he would have judged beyond the scope of Mrs. Falshaw's art. He could hardly suppose that they did it for the sake of gain; for, poor as they were, they had taken him in under protest and had made no effort to keep him until now.

This change from hostility to the extreme of friendliness dated from the evening when he had declared to Falshaw that he felt no fear.

The statement (he had to own it) required qualification. It was true enough that he felt no fear of the primal, the complete manifestation. That, having all the colours and appearances of flesh and blood, had the value, the assurance, almost the inevitability of a natural thing. It had parted with its horror from the moment when he perceived that it was responsive to his pity and accessible to his succour.

But Garvin, reviewing his experiences, distinguished between the perfect and the imperfect. Beyond the primal haunting, round and about the central figure, the completed vision, he was conscious of a borderland of fear into which he had not yet entered.

It was chiefly present to him as a disagreeable feeling he had about his bedroom—a feeling which little Garvin, as he valued his own manliness, sternly refused to attend to. Still it was there. But for that sense he had, he would have preferred his garret to the long eastern chambers looking on the orchard of dead trees. The branches that hung before his window were alive. At sunset the light ran through their leaves, kindling them to a divine translucent green. And yet he loathed it.

The room had, clearly, some profound significance for the child, since it was always compelled to come there. But the significance was something that Garvin didn't care to explore; he felt it to be part of the peculiar, foggy unpleasantness of the borderland.

It was strange that, while he knew no terror of the perfect apparition, the bedfellow, his fear of the borderland was growing on him. His feeling was that if the things that were *there* became visible they would be more than he could endure.

There were degrees in the clearness of the primal manifestation; degrees which, as he made it out, corresponded to the intensity of the emotion, the suffering behind it. The child's form gathered and lost substance. At times it was of an extreme tenuity, suggesting nothing tangible. At times it had, not only the colour, but the pressure of flesh and blood. At times its face, its hands, and little naked feet had the peculiar vivid whiteness of white skin seen under water. Its feet along the floor were like feet moving through water.

He saw it now by day as well as night. It would pass him in the passage, on the stairs. It lay in wait for him at his door or at its own. He had an idea that it spent hours playing in the backyard under the ash-trees. Once when he looked out of his window he could have sworn

that he saw it hanging over the great stone water-tank that stood there at the corner of the wall. He had never once seen it in his sitting-room, and what went on in the Falshaws' kitchen he could not say.

Thrice he saw it in the garden, coming towards him from the back-yard and going to a corner under the orchard wall. As it passed under the trees he could see the grass growing through its feet. It carried in its hand a little cup of water which it emptied there in the corner. It was busy and absorbed, very earnestly and seriously bent upon this act. He noticed that always, out of doors, the appearance was imperfect, but he discerned dimly that, out of doors, it had a happy look.

He examined the corner that it visited. A long flat-faced stone stood upright in the wall there; below it, hidden by the grass, he found a small plot marked out with stones.

A child's garden ruined beyond remembrance. There were gaps in its borders where the stones had been upheaved or buried. In the middle, trampled and beaten into the earth, he came upon the fragments of a broken cup.

It was thus that he began to construct the child's history. He had found that its more complete manifestations occurred indoors, on the landing and after dark, and that they culminated in bodily contact, the pressure of its form—the bedfellow's—against his own. And so he argued that outside, in the open air, it had been happy. It was within the house that the suffering which was its life had come to pass; the suffering was somehow connected with the closing of Mrs. Falshaw's door; it was habitually intenser at night-time, and it had its unspeakable climax, its agony, in Garvin's room.

On all these points he was certain with an absolute and immutable certainty. What baffled him was their date. Things had happened. He had more than a sense, an intolerable sense, of their happening. But *when* had they happened? To which one of the four generations that the house had known?

He thought he could tell if he could only get into the room where, as far as he could make it out, the whole thing started, the garret opposite his own with the stair before its door. It was the child's room and was bound to contain some sign or trace of the child. He must contrive to get in somehow.

He found a pretext. The parlour was still lumbered with the packing-cases his books had travelled in (Garvin had bruised his shins over them more than once). He approached Falshaw and asked him if he might not store the packing-cases in that box-room that they had upstairs. He supposed it was a box-room.

Falshaw hesitated. His gloom deepened. Presently, with some visible perturbation, he replied. Mr. Garvin might do as he liked. He would give him the key of the room. Mr. Garvin would be so good as to put the packing-cases in the space behind the door, without—Falshaw's trouble grew on him—disarranging anything.

He carried the cases upstairs and left them on the landing after giving

Garvin the key of the room. It was evident that nothing would induce him to go in there himself.

Garvin's heart beat thickly as he entered. The room—he could see at a glance—was not used as a box-room. It was not used now for anything at all. It was a long garret, narrowed excessively by the sloping roof, and bare of all furniture but a chest of drawers and a washstand near the window, and, drawn to the far end of the room against the wall, two objects, each covered with a white sheet.

Garvin drew back the sheets. Thrust away, hidden out of sight, shrouded like the dead, were a child's little chair and a child's cot. He could see the slender hollow in the mattress where its body had lain.

He raised the edge of the coarse blue and white counterpane. The pillow beneath was not soiled, neither was it freshly clean. There was a small round patch, slightly discoloured, slightly dinted, by the pressure of a child's head.

For a moment that brought the thing horribly near to him.

He felt the hollows with his hand and found that they were hard. His reason told him that it must have taken more than one generation to make them so. He was, therefore, no surer of his date. The room had given him an uncomfortable sensation, and that was all.

That evening, setting out for his walk, he met Falshaw in the path coming over the brow of the hill. They exchanged a greeting and some remarks about the weather. There was a wind on the hill, and Falshaw advised Garvin not to go far. It was beating up, he said, for rain.

Garvin turned and walked back with him towards the lane. A sudden impulse seized him to make Falshaw talk. They stopped at the rise where the naked plum-tree pointed to the house in the Bottom.

"That's not an old house for these parts, Falshaw. How long have you had it?"

"Ever since ah can remember. Ma faather had it before me, and 'is faather before 'im agen."

"Four generations, then?"

"Three, sir." He added, "There'll be four soon enough if all goas well."

It was his first open reference to his wife's state.

"Why shouldn't all go well?"

"Thot's what I tell the missus. But ah can't move 'er. She's got it into 'er 'ead thot thick," said Falshaw gloomily.

Garvin murmured something vaguely consoling; and all the time his mind was running on his date. He must make Falshaw give it him.

"You see, Mr. Garvin, she's bin, you may say, in a dark state ever since——"

He stopped. Speech was painful and difficult to him.

"Ever since?" For a moment Garvin felt that Falshaw might be giving him the date.

But if Falshaw had hovered on the verge of a confidence he now drew back. All he said was, "It's more sometimes than ah can put oop with."

He meditated.

"And t' doctor, e cooms to cheer 'er oop, but 'e can't *do* nowt."

"What does he think?" asked Garvin, recalled to sympathy by the man's misery.

"Think? 'E doan't think. 'E saays it's natch'ral to 'er condition. But—ah doan't remember——"

He stopped again, and fell into the gloom that Garvin recognised as the shadow of his wife's dark state.

"It's a bod job, Mr. Garvin, it's a bod job."

"I wonder," said Garvin, "if I ought to stay much longer. She may be doing too much. Honestly, hadn't I better go?"

Falshaw shook his head.

"Doan't you think thot, sir; doan't you think thot."

"I can't bear," Garvin went on, "to be giving trouble at a time like this."

"Trooble? You call *thot* trooble?"

"Well——"

"You'll bring trooble, Mr. Garvin, if you goa"

"I don't understand."

"And ah doan't understond it neither. But—if you *can* stop, Mr. Garvin, doan't you goa. Doan't you goa."

He paused.

"If she sees you con stond it, maybe she'll mak out thot things can't be so bod."

Things? It was vague; but when it came to the point, to Garvin's point, Falshaw *was* vague. Garvin felt that they were on the verge again. He was determined to find out how much Falshaw knew, or how much he didn't know. He would tackle him there and then. He would tackle him suddenly and straight.

"Things can't be so bad if I can stand them?" he questioned. "And how bad do you think they are yourself, Falshaw?"

"Ah doan't think. And ah *knaw* nobbut what ah've heard. What you've heard." (He glossed it further.) "What folks saay."

"And these things—that they say, how long have they been said?"

Falshaw winced. "Ah doan't knaw."

There was no doubt that Falshaw repudiated any personal knowledge of the things; but then, Garvin reflected, he might be lying. He pressed it home.

"Before your time?"

"Noa. Not afore *me* time. Thot couldn't be."

He said it simply and uncontrollably, as if it had been wrung from him, not by Garvin but by the pressure of some suffering of his own. He was profoundly unaware of having given Garvin what he wanted.

"You know *that*," said Garvin, who was for the moment insensible to pity in the excitement of following his trail.

Falshaw rallied. "Ah knaw nothing, ah tell you, but what ah've heard. Nothing but what *you've* heard, Mr. Garvin."

They had come to the stone stile that led into the lane. They stood there facing each other.

"It's not what I've heard," said Garvin. "It's what I've seen."

At that Falshaw turned from him and bowed himself upon the stone wall.

VII

Up till that moment Garvin had barely hinted at the nature of his experiences. He was aware that his previous intimations had given Falshaw some uncomfortable emotions; but he was not prepared for the violence of the passion with which his final revelation was received.

He couldn't leave the man there in his agony; neither could he touch him nor speak to him. A certain awe restrained him in the presence of a feeling so tremendous and inscrutable.

It was Falshaw who recovered first, pulling his huge bulk together and steadying himself to speak. It was as if under it all he had not forgotten the consideration due to Garvin, who had become so inexplicably the witness and partaker of his tragedy.

"Mr. Garvin," he said, "ah think ah knaw what you may have seen. And ah tell you you've noa call to be afeard. It woan't harm you."

It was what Anny had told him.

"I know," he said, "it won't harm me."

"It wouldn't," Falshaw went on. "There's a soort o' pity in they things."

He paused, feeling for his words.

"They knaw; and they doan't coom to those that are afeard of 'em. They doan't coom so as to be seen."

He paused again, meditating, and fell back upon his phrase, "It's the pity in them."

He climbed the stone stile and went slowly towards his house.

Garvin turned and walked again to the brow of the hill. There he stopped and looked back. Above the stone wall of the orchard, in the corner of the child's garden, he saw Falshaw standing, with his head bowed to his breast.

He said to himself then that he might have known. The child's garden under the orchard grass—*that* belonged clearly to the Falshaws' time. Why—as grass grows—within fifteen, within ten years it would have been buried, grassed over, without a stone to show that it had ever been. It belonged, not to Falshaw's father's generation, nor yet to Falshaw's but to the generation that his wife bore in her womb.

VIII

The wild plum-tree on the hill rocked in the south-west wind, and pointed, gesticulated at the house.

Garvin's gaze followed the network of stone walls flung over the country. He had a sense of the foregoneness of the things he saw. He

saw the network as a system of lines that, wherever you picked it up and followed it, led in some predestined way to the house as its secret and its centre. You couldn't get away from the house.

It was in an effort to get away from it that he walked on towards the fells.

The wind, as Falshaw had warned him, was beating up for rain. The south-west was black with rain. He could see it scudding up over the shoulder of the fell.

Half-way he turned and was blown home before the storm, leaning backwards, supporting himself on the wind. A mile from the Bottom the rain caught him and soaked him through.

Falshaw and Anny stood at the door of the house, watching for him. They were troubled at his drenching. He changed, and threw his dripping clothes down over the stairhead to be dried in the kitchen. He knew that neither Falshaw nor Anny had the nerve to go to his room to fetch them. He was glad to get out of it himself.

Mrs. Falshaw had his supper keeping hot for him by the kitchen hearth. She proposed that he should sit and eat it there while the fire was being lit in the parlour. He had owned to a chilliness.

She had set the lamp on the supper table, and sat in the ring of twilight with darkness behind her. Portions of her face and body thus appeared superficially illuminated, while the bulk of her became part of the darkness. Garvin was deeply aware of her face and of her eyes, which were fixed on him with an intolerable hunger. The face was sombre and sallow; it was hewn with a hard, unrounded heaviness, unlike her husband's. It would have been deadly hard but for the fugitive, hunted look that gave it a sort of painful life in deadness. Whether she sat or stood she was a creature overtaken, fixed in her fear, with no possibility of escape.

There were moments when he thought that she was about to speak, to ask him what he had seen. He felt somehow that she knew. She knew he had seen something. Whatever Mackinnon thought, he, Garvin, knew, and her husband knew, that she suffered no bodily ailment. What weighed on her was her sense of the supernatural, and her fear of it and of its inscrutable work on her, penetrating her flesh and striking the child that was to be born. It had been already brought home to him that his value, his fascination for her lay in his shared sense of it. That was the secret that they kept between them.

It was terrible to have to sit in that tongue-tied communion, and eat, bearing his own knowledge and her sense of it. He was glad when it was over and he was safe in the parlour, a place which he felt to be immune from these influences.

Anny was in there, on her knees by the hearth, trying to coax the fire to draw up the damp chimney. His impulse urged him to talk to Anny as he had talked to Falshaw. He was at that stage when he had to talk to somebody; and he wanted to know how much Anny knew.

"Anny," he said, "my bed's damp; why didn't you go up and shut the window?" He knew why.

She rose and stood before him, awkwardly wiping her hands on her rough apron.

"Because I'm afeard, sir."

He looked at Anny. She was coarsely made as to the body, but to his purified perception there seemed to flow from her an almost radiant innocence and probity.

"What are you afraid of?"

She glanced aside miserably.

"You knaw what."

"Yes, I know. But you told me yourself it wouldn't hurt me."

"Hurt you? Little Affy——"

It had a name then, but he hadn't caught it.

"Little——"

"Little Affy."

"Effy," he murmured.

"Yes, sir. Little Affy never 'urt anyone in her life."

He said it over to himself. It touched him even more than Falshaw's "There's a sort of pity in they things." It brought the child nearer to him, poignantly near, in tender flesh and blood. He felt the sting of an intolerable evocation.

It was not yet complete.

"Who *was* little Effy?"

The girl's eyelids flickered and reddened and filled with tears.

"I mustn't talk about her, sir."

"Why not?"

"I promised Ooncle."

"It doesn't matter, does it, as long as I'm not afraid?"

"You're *not* afraid, sir" (she whispered it), "to sleep with her?"

"No, Anny, I'm not afraid."

The girl said "Good night" as if she had said "God bless you," and left him to his thought.

Whatever Anny had or hadn't seen, she *knew*.

He could not doubt that he was alone in his complete experience, yet he would have said that if ever there was a man and a woman and a girl that were haunted, it was Falshaw and his wife and the girl Anny. He could only suppose that their haunting was vague and imperfect. They lived on the edge of the borderland of fear, discovering nothing clearly yet knowing all. Anny, at any rate, knew the worst.

For he always put it to himself that it *was* the worst, even while he felt in his flesh the horror of the borderland, his own borderland, beyond.

It was on him that night, though he tried to fortify himself by reiterating that he knew the worst, and that if his nerves could stand that they could stand anything. He was not afraid (as Anny had suggested) to sleep as he had slept; he was not afraid of his bedfellow. He was afraid of his room, and of his bed, of the white sheets and the coarse quilt, of the whole twilight bulk of it, waiting for him in the corner by the window wall.

His sense of terror had defined itself as a sense of evil surpassing the

fear of the supernatural. It was borne in on him that some iniquitous thing had had its place in this house and in this room.

He lay awake there, listening to the sounds of the night; to the wind sweeping the ash boughs along the roof above his window; to the drip of the rain in the stone trough beneath. The sounds of the night comforted him; and, before long, his brain became fogged with a grey stupor. But the stupor was like a veil spread over some backward, bottomless pit of fear. Tenuous itself, intangible, it yet held him, perilously it held him, breaking, delaying, lengthening out, moment by moment, his imminent descent.

The air in the close garret oppressed him to suffocation. He got up and opened the window. The wind and the rain had passed, the ash-trees were still; a clear light, grey as water, filled the room. Things showed in it solid and distinct. Something seemed to shift in Garvin's brain with the sudden shifting of his body, and, as he stood there at the foot of the bed, he was aware of something happening before him.

He couldn't say what it was that happened. He only knew that it was bound to happen; it had been foreshadowed by his fear. He knew what that sudden shifting in his brain meant. He had simply gone over the borderland of fear and was in the gripping centre.

There were two there, a man and a woman. He did not discern them as ordinary supernatural presences; the terror they evoked surpassed all fear of the intangible. Of one thing he was certain—the man was Falshaw. He could swear to that. The woman he had with him was a woman whom Garvin had never seen. He couldn't say what it was he saw, what was done by those two, but he knew that it was evil. He couldn't say whether he really saw it, or whether he apprehended it by some supreme sense more living and more horrible than sight. It was monstrous, unintelligible; it lay outside the order of his experience. He seemed, in this shifting of his brain, to have parted with his experience, to have become a creature of vague memory and appalling possibilities of fear. He had told the truth when he had said that he was not afraid. Until this moment he had never known what fear was. The feeling was unspeakable. Its force, its vividness was such as could be possible only to a mind that came virgin to horror.

The whole thing lasted for a second or so. When it passed and the two with it, Garvin turned and saw the child, in its nightgown and with its naked feet, standing in the middle of the room and staring at the bed as he had stared. The fear on its face was more terrible to Garvin than his own fear. If it *was* his own.

He turned sick and knew nothing. He supposed he must have fainted.

IX

The next day Garvin said to himself that he would see Mackinnon His nerves had gone to pieces for the time being, and he would have to get Mackinnon to patch them up. He found himself clinging to the thought of Mackinnon

He spent the morning and afternoon out of doors, as far from Falshaw's as his legs would carry him; and in the evening he went to see Mackinnon.

The doctor was out, and Garvin waited. He hadn't the pluck to go back to Falshaw's without seeing Mackinnon.

By the time Mackinnon appeared (late for dinner) Garvin knew that he hadn't really come there to consult him. He had come to talk to him, to make him tell him what he knew about the Falshaws. He couldn't think why on earth he hadn't done it before, but he supposed Mackinnon must have put him off by the stupid things he had said about his nerves. He didn't mean to be put off to-night, and he wasn't going to talk about his nerves.

Neither was Mackinnon. He only looked at Garvin and said it was odd his being there; for he had just gone round to Falshaw's to see Garvin and bring him back to dine.

They dined alone together (Mackinnon was a bachelor); but it was afterwards in his den, over the cigarettes and whisky, that they talked.

"I say," said Garvin, who began it, "do you know anything about those Falshaws?"

"Oh, as much as I know about most people," said Mackinnon.

"Do you know what's the matter with them?"

"Would you expect me to own it if I didn't?"

"You know as well as I do that there's something wrong with them."

"There's something wrong with Mrs. Falshaw. Melancholy. They get it. She's had it ever since."

"Ever since what? That's what I want to know."

Mackinnon shrugged. "Ever since she began to be—— "

"You think *that* accounts for it?"

"Presumably."

"Well—but how about Falshaw? And how about the girl Anny? And if it comes to that—how about *me*?"

"You? I suppose you've been hearing some queer stories. There *are* queer stories."

"I haven't heard one of them," said Garvin.

"Are you quite sure?"

"Positive."

"What *have* you heard, then?"

"I told you the other day."

"Yes," said Mackinnon; "that's one of the stories."

"How do you account for them?"

"The stories?"

"Yes."

"The facts account for the stories right enough."

"You mean they've been fabricated after the fact?"

"That's what happens."

"You forget," said Garvin, "that I haven't heard the stories and that I don't yet know the facts."

"I can give you them if you want them. They're quite as queer as the stories, and more interesting, because more human."

"I think," said Garvin, "you'd better hear *my* story first."

"Haven't I heard it?"

"Not my latest. Do you want it?"

"Well, I'd like to see if it's different from other people's. You know they all say they've *heard* things."

"Do they say they've seen them?"

"No. None of them seem to have gone as far as that."

"Well, I've gone as far as that—farther."

He told Mackinnon as casually as he could what he had seen.

Mackinnon was inclined to be impatient. "Yes, yes—a child that cries—in a nightgown—of course. But can you describe her? Can you give me any details?"

"She was very small; she had short hair—bleached—and pale eyes. The flesh under her eyes was sunken. Two little pits—just here. Her face was sallow white and drawn a little, by her nostrils——"

"Queer," murmured Mackinnon, "very queer."

Garvin went on till Mackinnon interrupted him again.

"Beating on the door? Which door?"

"The door of Mrs. Falshaw's room."

"All right. Go on."

Garvin went on, to the scene in the orchard. "And I've seen it hanging over that stone tank at the back."

"Good God!" said Mackinnon softly.

Garvin came to his last experience.

"There," he said, "I own I am a bit vague."

"You're certain you saw a man and a woman?"

"Yes. And I'm certain that the man was Falshaw. But the woman I know nothing about. It wasn't Mrs. Falshaw."

"No," said Mackinnon thoughtfully. "Can you describe her?"

"I couldn't see her very well. Falshaw was between us. She was big and young and—that part of it's beastly."

He stopped

"And the beastliest thing about it is that I didn't understand it, Mackinnon, I didn't understand it—and, frankly, I was in an awful funk."

Mackinnon stared. "You didn't understand it?"

"I'm only talking about what I felt at the time. I'm explaining what made it so horrible. I seemed to have parted with my power of understanding—a whole tract of knowledge—clean gone——"

Mackinnon was silent.

"What room were you in?" he asked presently.

"The small room at the back."

"I know." The doctor shifted his position as if he were trying to shake off something.

"Well," he said, "that yarn of yours would be queer enough if you

knew the facts. As it is, I don't mind telling you that it's the queerest yarn I've heard yet."

"Can you account for it?"

"My dear Garvin, you can't live up here, in this country and with these people, and still go about accounting for things. If you're a wise man you accept them."

"You accept my statements then?"

"I have to. They square with the facts. Did you say anything to the Falshaws?"

"A little—to him—and Anny. I can't tell how much they know. They wouldn't say."

"Anny wouldn't?"

"She let out that the child's name was Effy; and then she told me she'd promised Falshaw not to talk about her."

"She isn't allowed to talk about her—because she—*knows*. She didn't tell you that Effy was the Falshaws' child?"

"No."

"She was Their only child. She died three years ago."

"How?"

"Drowned. In the stone tank under your window."

"She fell in," said Garvin dreamily.

"She fell in. There was nobody about. She must have had some sort of fit, or she could have got out all right."

"Who found her?"

"The woman you saw."

Garvin winced.

"The Falshaws were severely censured at the inquest. You see, the child oughtn't to have been left alone. She'd had one fit about a month before and they knew it."

"And before that?"

"Can't say. Nobody knew. They weren't likely to know. The child was left by herself night and day."

"I see. That's what's the matter with them."

"No doubt it's what's given Sarah Falshaw this idea of hers that the baby will be born dead. Shouldn't wonder if it was. Good thing, too, when you think how she made the other one suffer."

Mackinnon's fire broke out. "Women like that oughtn't to bear children. But they do. They always will do."

"She wants it to live?"

"I can't tell you what she wants—now."

"She didn't want—the other one?"

"Oh, she wanted her well enough. But she wanted something else more. And she had to want. She'd been all right to the child until she found that out; and then she couldn't bear the sight of it."

"She wanted another man, I suppose?"

"Not a bit of it. She wanted her own husband. It isn't a pretty story to tell, Garvin."

X

All the same he told it.

"I'd say she was like an animal, only animals don't carry the thing to the point of insanity. And animals—most of them, at any rate—aren't cruel to their young."

"What did she do to it?"

"She did nothing. That was it. She used to say it was Falshaw's fault that she didn't care for it. Everything, you see, was Falshaw's fault. But she behaved as if it was the child's fault that Falshaw didn't want her. You'd have said she had a grudge against it. Things certainly got worse after it came. But she'd led him a life before that. Lord, what a life a woman *can* lead a man when she wants him more than he wants her and he lets her know it.

"They'd been all right at first. You wouldn't think it, but Sarah was a fine-looking woman when he married her—one of those hard black and white women who turn yellow when they worry. And Sarah was the sort that worried. She worried the life out of Falshaw. He was a big, strong, full-blooded fellow with a lot of exuberant young animality about him, and look at him now; what aged man do you suppose he is? Fifty, wouldn't you? Well, if you'll believe it, he's only thirty-eight. That's Sarah.

"He was twenty-three when he married her, and Sarah may have been a bit older. And they'd been married five years before the child came. He wasn't a bad sort, Falshaw, and he rubbed along with Sarah and her tongue and her temper for three years or so. He used to say she didn't mean it, and she couldn't help it, and she'd be all right when there was a youngster or two about. I suppose he thought all women were like that when they hadn't any children. The worst of it was she knew he thought it, and it riled her.

"Many a man would have tried to knock it out of her with a stout ash stick, but Falshaw wasn't that sort. He chuckled and grinned at her and reckoned secretly on the baby. And there's something exquisitely irritating, to a woman of Sarah's temperament, in a man who chuckles and grins and reckons on a baby that doesn't come. And long before it came she'd tired him out, and he took up with another woman, a bad lot.

"That was a temporary lapse. Falshaw's heart wasn't in it. And, though I don't suppose Sarah forgave him, she got over it. But she never got over Rhoda Webster.

"Rhoda was a servant girl at the White Hart Inn. I don't blame Falshaw, mind you. When I think what his life was, I'm glad he had that one bright spot of immorality to look back upon. He'd got into the way of going off to the White Hart—a good two miles—to get out of the range of his wife's tongue, and Rhoda wasn't by any means a bad girl—then. She was neither good nor bad; she was just natural, without a bit of art to help her one way or the other. Anyhow, there was so little harm in the girl—then—or in Falshaw for that matter, that nothing happened till he had her in his house after Sarah's child was born. Sarah was laid up for months—that's how it took her—and the man was at his

wits' end. Rhoda got restless and left her place, and was always in and out of Falshaw's house looking after Falshaw. She'd walk the two miles from the village and back just to cook his dinner and see him eat it. And when Sarah got about again she wasn't fit for much, and she had to mind the baby. So Falshaw kept on having the girl about the house. He said he had to have someone.

"That went on for months and months. It looked innocent enough; but Sarah began to suspect things. They had a row about it. Sarah said the girl was to go, and Falshaw said she was to stay, and if Sarah didn't like it she could lump it.

"It ended in the girl staying altogether. She slept in the house. Then Sarah found them out. And this time it broke her nerve. If she'd been a woman of any spirit she'd have left him. But she wasn't that sort. The feeling she had for Falshaw wouldn't let her leave him. She had to stay. She wasn't going to leave him to the other woman, and the other woman wasn't going to leave him to her. So there they were all three, shut up in that house, Falshaw carrying on with Rhoda behind his wife's back, and his wife stalking them, and seeing everything and pretending half the time she didn't see. And Rhoda, if you please, amiable, imperturbable, scouring and scrubbing, and behaving as if it didn't matter to her whether Falshaw carried on with her or not. She always had that air of not knowing what Sarah saw to worry about.

"At first, I believe, Falshaw made a great point of not leaving Sarah. But one night he never came near her. And then Sarah turned. The next night was a wet one, and she waited till Rhoda was in the back-yard or somewhere, and she locked her out. Up till then Falshaw had chuckled and grinned and gone his own way, reckoning on the child that had come to keep things straight. He excused himself for everything by saying Sarah'd got the child.

"But when he came home that night and found Rhoda standing on the front doorstep in the rain, he went for Sarah there and then and told her that if she did anything more to the girl he'd go out of the house —he and Rhoda—and leave her, as he put it, for good and all. He was sick of her. It was her own doing. She'd driven him to it. It had got to be, and she'd have to 'put oop with it.' Can't you hear him saying it? He hammered it in. She'd got the child. He'd given her the child; and it ought to be enough for her.

"Up till then she might have had some hope of getting him back, but when he began to talk about the child she knew it was the end. And she blamed the child for it. If the child hadn't been born Falshaw's girl would never have got her foot into the house. If the child hadn't been born she'd have had her strength, she could have turned the girl out and made her stay out. If the child hadn't been born she'd have kept her good looks and had a hold on Falshaw.

"Which," said Mackinnon, "was all perfectly true."

"How old was the child then?" Garvin asked.

"Let me think. It must have been about three."

"It was older than that when *I* saw it," said Garvin.

"Up till then it hadn't suffered," said Mackinnon. "Sarah had been quite decent to it. But when she realised that she'd got it instead of her husband she couldn't bear it near her.

"The first thing she did was to turn it out of the bed where it used to sleep with her. They say she couldn't stand the touch of its body against hers. You see that was how she took it. You may think I'm unjust to the woman—Heaven knows she suffered—but if you'd seen her with that child and how *it* suffered—I've seen passion, animal passion, in unpleasanter forms than you can imagine, and I've seen some very ugly results of its frustration; but that woman showed me the ugliest thing on God's earth—the hard, savage lust that avenges its frustration on its own offspring. If she couldn't have Falshaw with her she wouldn't have the child. That was her attitude.

"When it was older she turned it out of her room—that long room in the front. It had to sleep by itself in some place at the back——"

"I know," said Garvin.

"Not that Sarah was actively or deliberately cruel. It was well-fed and all that. But it loved its mother—and it knew. My God—how she *could!* I've seen the child making love to that woman—making love, Garvin, with its little face and its funny voice and its fingers—stroking her; and if she didn't push it away, she'd sit and take no notice of it. But it went on.

"I've seen that; and I've seen Rhoda kiss it and give it things when its mother wasn't looking. Rhoda was always good to it. But it would go from Rhoda to its mother any day.

"That was when it was little. She'd suckled it, you see, before she took a grudge against it.

"At last she took to locking her door against it. Once Rhoda found it beating on the door and crying the house down, and she took it into her own bed.

"Rhoda slept in the servant's room, the room you have now.

"All this came out at the inquest, mind you, when Rhoda gave evidence. Lots of things came out. It seems that when Falshaw was annoyed with his wife or she with Falshaw, she vented her annoyance on the child. She found out that was the way to hurt him. For instance, Falshaw had dug a little garden for it at the bottom of the orchard. And it made the child happy. She used to go running backwards and forwards from the stone tank to the garden, watering it from a little cup that Rhoda gave her. Rhoda and Falshaw used to play with her there. One day Mrs. Falshaw found them at it. And she took the cup from the child and broke it to pieces in a fury, and stamped on the garden till she'd destroyed it. Just because Falshaw made it. Rhoda took the child into the house so that it mightn't see what its mother was doing. She got that in at the inquest, too. But she shielded Falshaw so well, and made the case so black against his wife, that it was considered to damage her evidence.

"And here's where you come in. When the child couldn't get into its mother's room it used to go across to Rhoda's, and creep into her bed

and cuddle up to her for warmth. It was always cold. It fretted, you see, and though it was well-fed its food didn't do it any good. I was always being called in. Once I spoke my mind to Sarah Falshaw, and she told me I didn't know what I was talking about.

"Then, one night, it went into Rhoda's room and found Falshaw there.

"And I'm inclined to think, Garvin, that you saw what it saw. For Falshaw turned round and cursed it. Heaven knows how much it understood. Falshaw may have frightened it. Anyhow, it had some kind of fit—the first, I believe, it ever did have.

"After that it was afraid of Falshaw and of Rhoda, though it had been very fond of both of them. Oddly, enough, it never was afraid of its mother. Account for *that* if you can."

"What happened," said Garvin, who didn't attempt to account for it, "when Effy died?"

"Falshaw sent Rhoda away, wouldn't have anything more to do with her. His wife blamed them both for the child's death, and Falshaw blamed himself. It sobered him. He's been a good husband to that woman ever since.

"It's queer, Garvin—but in one way it hasn't changed him. He still reckons on the child, the child that Mrs. Falshaw insists will be born dead. It may be. But it's far more probable——"

"What is?"

"That Sarah Falshaw will go off her head. That," said Mackinnon, "is what *I'm* waiting for."

They were silent a long time till Garvin spoke.

"But, Mackinnon, what do you make of it? Of my seeing these things? It's a series of hallucinations, if you like. But a series, and it all tallies. On your own showing it all tallies."

"It does."

"What I can't get at is *why* it tallies—what makes me see?"

Mackinnon brooded, while Garvin excitedly went on.

"Is it, do you suppose, suggestion? Or some influence given off by these people—by their evil consciences?"

"Or," said Mackinnon gravely—"their evil."

XI

It was morning. Garvin was sitting in the field under the plum-tree, staring at the house in the Bottom, the house that seemed to stand always in the twilight, to gather upon its walls a perpetual dusk.

It knew no sun, only degrees of twilight, dark and clear. Yesterday under a grey sky it had been drenched in gloom. To-day, when the south was golden white with the sun, when the hot air quivered like water over the grass tops in the field, the house stood as if withdrawn into its own grey, sub-lucid evening, intolerably secret, intolerably remote.

And now he knew its secret. "Their evil" saturating the very

walls, leaking through and penetrating those other walls, the bounds of Garvin's personality, starting in him a whole train of experience not his own.

Their evil. It had been for Mackinnon an immense admission. It went beyond all accepted theories of suggestion; and considering what Mackinnon's information was compared with his, Garvin couldn't see that he could very well have gone further. The doctor had watched the outside of events; whereas he, Garvin, had been taken into the invisible places, into the mystic heart of suffering. He knew the unnamed, unnameable secret of pity and fear.

These things had become the substance of his innermost self.

His knowledge, overlaid by his own adult experience, had been a little tangled and obscure; Mackinnon's revelations had served to make it orderly, clear, complete. From that tale, half-savage, half-sordid, from that tragedy of the Falshaws, from that confusion of sombre lusts, and unclean, carnal miseries, there emerged the figure of the child Effy, tender, luminous, spiritual, unspeakably lovable and pure.

He knew now what had happened to him. He had been made the vehicle of that spirit; he had been possessed, divinely coerced by Effy. What he had seen he had seen with Effy's eyes, with Effy's awful innocence and terror. He had slipped the intangible bonds, to become one (Heaven knew how) with that slender, fragile being, broken by the invasion of a knowledge out of all proportion to its understanding. For Effy's vision of evil had been thus immense and horrible because it had been so obscure, so unintelligible. He could not doubt that he had shared to some extent the child's malady.

But all that had been only for a moment. What really possessed him and remained with him was Effy's passion. Effy's passion (for the mother who had not loved her) was *the* supernatural thing, the possessing, pursuing, unappeasably crying thing that haunted the Falshaws' house. Effy's passion was indestructible. It was set free of time and of mortality. He could not detach Effy from her passion and think of her as in a place apart. Where it was there she was also.

As far as Garvin could make out from his experience, the place of the blessed or of the unblessed was not by any means a place apart. There were no bounds and partitions between flesh and spirit, the visible and invisible. He had seen Effy's spirit as flesh.

He asked himself why he had seen it? Why he and not any of the Falshaws of whose flesh she was? Falshaw and Anny had given him a hint. He saw Effy because he was not afraid to see her. Fear was the great blinder and divider. Falshaw could see that.

But hadn't Falshaw, in his moment of inspiration, seen further? Wasn't it Effy's pity that had spared them? She hadn't hurt them—she had never hurt anyone in her life. She hadn't pressed them hard.

Under Effy's pressure, her continual pursuing of him, Garvin's "Why?" had come to mean "For what reason? To what end?"

Mackinnon's story had enlightened him. He was the intercessor between Effy's passion and the Falshaws' fear.

Effy's suffering had endured with her indestructible, unappeasable passion. It was through him, Garvin, that her passion clamoured for satisfaction and her suffering for rest.

She had come back (so he made it out) to recover the love that had been withheld from her. She pursued them all; but, if her father and Anny were afraid of her, her mother was mortally afraid. And it was her mother that she wanted to get at. She could only get at her mother through Garvin, who had no fear.

It was clear to Garvin that Mrs. Falshaw divined what purpose he had been put to. Her fear divined it. And how, he now asked himself, was he, the intercessor, going to break down her fear? Plainly she, like her husband, was relying on Effy's pity to protect her from the vision of Effy. It was a sort of moral support to her; and morally the woman was already so shattered and undermined that to break any prop might bring down the whole structure. Mackinnon had warned him of that. And there was her state to be considered. He had been at Falshaw's now for nearly a month. It wanted but seven weeks of her time. But it was borne in upon Garvin that if he waited till *afterwards* it would be too late—for Effy.

If he were responsible for Mrs. Falshaw, how about his responsibility to Effy? That—seeing the incredible relation in which he stood to her—was unmistakable; it was supreme. And couldn't he, who knew her, rely upon Effy too?

He watched his opportunity for three days. Then, on the evening of the third day, the last of August, the thing was taken out of his hands. Mrs. Falshaw sent for him of her own accord.

She was sitting in her chair in the kitchen and excused herself from rising as he entered. There was nothing unusual in her appearance—nothing, as far as he could see, premonitory. What he did notice was the unabated fear in her eyes as she fixed them on him. She was holding something hidden in her lap.

A chair had been placed for Garvin close beside her

"Mr. Garvin," she said, "d'ye knaw it'll be a month to-morrow you've been here? I didn't look for ya to stop soa long."

"Why shouldn't I? You've been very good to me."

"Good to ya? Who wouldn' be good to ya? You're a good man, Mr. Garvin, else you'd a been afeard to stop. You'd 'ave tuk and roon like the reat of 'em."

She brooded. Garvin sought for words to break the intolerable silence, and found none.

"Ah can't blaame 'em. Ah'm afeard myself."

"There's no need. It's not a thing to be afraid of. It's a thing to pity, Mrs. Falshaw—and to love. Such a little thing."

She looked at him. Her obscure soul was at his feet. Up till now she had not known the extent and substance of his knowledge; but now she knew. It was not only that she respected him as one who had seen the thing she feared and had not feared it. She yearned to him; she longed

for touch with him, as if through him she reached, unterrified, the divine, disastrous vision.

"It's true what they saay?" she said. "You've heard it?"

"I've seen it."

"Tell me what you've seen?" she whispered.

He told her in a few words. He saw her body stiffen as she braced herself to hear him. She heard him in silence until he began witnessing to Effy's form, her face, her features; then she gave a low moan of assent. "Thot's her. Thot's Affy."

She now uncovered the thing she had held hidden in her lap. "Was it like thot?" she said. "Would you knaw 'er from thot picture?" She gave it him. It was a photograph of a much younger child than Effy as he had seen her.

He hesitated. "Yes. Just. She's a little older than this and thinner—ever so much thinner."

"Thot's Affy at three year old. She was seven when she died. She'd be ten year old to-day. To-day's 'er birthday."

Garvin got on with his tale as far as the child's coming to his bed. He told how he had received the little thing and had warmed it at his side. Hitherto Mrs. Falshaw had sat rigid and constrained, as if she held herself back from realisation of the thing she feared; but at that touch she trembled and broke down.

"You let 'er stay?" she cried. "You didn't send 'er away? You let little Affy stay with you?"

She drew back again and paused.

"She comes to you in 'er little night-shift?"

"Yes."

He wondered why she should ask him that and in that accent of fear made vehement.

"Thot's how ah'm *afeard* of seeing 'er."

She leaned forward to him.

"There's times, Mr. Garvin, when ah'm scairt for ma life o' seeing 'er, any way. And when the fear taks hold o' me, it strikes through, as if it wud kill the child. And so 'twull, so 'twull. 'Tisn' likely as ah should bear a living child. Ah'm not fit to 'ave un."

"Don't think of it," said Garvin.

"Thinking doan't mak' no difference. I doan't care," she cried savagely, "if 'tis killed."

"Don't say that, Mrs. Falshaw. Think of your husband."

That was not judicious of Garvin, as he saw. It stirred Mrs. Falshaw's devil from its sleep.

"Falshaw!" She spat his name out. "'E thinks child-bearing's the only cure for all a woman's suffering."

"He has suffered, too," said Garvin.

She softened. "'E's sot on it," she said. "'E saays if there's a child about the plaace, there'll be an end of the trooble. But I tall 'im if Affy's here, and she knaws, and she sees me takken oop with another child, 'twill be worse trooble for 'er then than 'tis now."

"You know what her trouble was and is."

She said nothing.

"And you know that at this moment, in this room, there's nothing between you and Effy but your fear."

"My little Affy! 'Tis more than that. If ah weren't afeard ah should see 'er, ah knaw. But if ah were a good woman ah shouldn't be afeard."

As she said it Garvin felt a light breath on the back of his neck. He turned and saw the child standing behind his chair. It slid past his shoulder, and he saw it now in the open space between him and the hearth-stone, facing Mrs. Falshaw. It advanced, solicitous, adventurous. It put out its hand and, with a touch that must have fallen light as thistle-down, it stroked its mother's face.

Mrs. Falshaw shrank slightly and put up her hands to ward it off, and the child slid back again. Garvin cried out, "Don't send her away—don't, for God's sake, send her away!"

Mrs. Falshaw and Effy seemed both unconscious of his cry.

He saw the child approach again fearlessly. It smiled, as with an unearthly pity and comprehension (he could not tell whether Effy had learnt this sad wisdom on earth, or in the place of the blessed). The look was superhuman. Urged by the persistence of its passion, the child hovered for a moment, divinely coercing, divinely caressing; its touch fell now on its mother's hair, now on her cheek, now on her lips, and lingered there.

And then the woman writhed and flung herself backwards in her chair away from it. Her face was convulsed with a hideous agony of fear. Then, even to Garvin's sight, Effy vanished.

That night Mrs. Falshaw was delivered of a dead child.

XII

That was at midnight.

An hour before, Garvin had been roused out of his bed by Falshaw knocking at his door. He flung on his clothes and went to fetch Mackinnon.

The doctor was up till dawn with Mrs. Falshaw. When he looked in again at noon of the next day he found the woman doing well. Her body, he said, was as strong as any horse.

He took Garvin away with him and put him up at his own house. It was better both for him and the Falshaws that he should be out of the way. Garvin was worrying. He held himself responsible for the event. Having been assured four times that Mrs. Falshaw's body was out of danger, he insisted on his fear as to her mind. Mackinnon had said himself that she would go off her head. Did Mackinnon think now that that was at all likely?

The doctor was cautious. He wouldn't swear to Mrs. Falshaw's mind. It might be better, or it might be worse. So far there had been no disturbing symptoms. She had behaved just like any other woman.

She had asked for the dead baby, and Falshaw had fetched it and put it in her arms. Mackinnon had left her looking at it. There was no distress. On the contrary, she was placid and curiously appeased. The mere act of child-bearing, Mackinnon declared, was sometimes enough to set a woman straight who had been queer before it. And Mrs. Falshaw had been decidedly queer.

Mackinnon was now steeped in the physical aspects of the case; and when Garvin dwelt morbidly on his own possible share in it, he became almost grossly derisive, and refused to listen to any other view. He was fantastically fertile in suggesting things that Garvin might just as well suppose. But when Garvin began to tell him about the latest appearance of the child, he was angry and got up and left him. There was a real child in the village, he said, whom he had to attend to.

That was about nine o'clock in the evening. Garvin had settled himself comfortably in Mackinnon's study with a book, when he was told that Mr. Falshaw was outside and wanted to see him. It wasn't the doctor, it was Mr. Garvin, the maid was sure of it, that he had said he must see.

Garvin went to Falshaw. He was standing in the door of the doctor's house. The lamp-light on his face showed it fallen and undone. He held, half-hidden under his arm, an oblong thing covered with a black cloth.

His wife, he said, wanted to see Garvin. She was in an awful way. They could do nothing with her She kept on calling for Mr. Garvin. They couldn't get the child away from her to bury it (he glanced at the thing he held under his arm).

Garvin left a message for Mackinnon and went out with Falshaw.

The short cut from the village was a mile and a half by the lane through the Bottom. As they trudged through the dark, Falshaw, between fits of silence, took up his tale. He'd been up to the village to fetch the coffin. The child was to be buried in the morning soon after daybreak. And the trouble was that its mother wouldn't hear of the burying. She'd got the child in the bed with her and she wouldn't let it go. They'd taken it from her when she was asleep and laid it on the cot in the back-room, and the nurse, she'd dressed it pretty. They were at their supper, and the nurse was out of the wife's room but five minutes when Sarah she'd up and she'd got, somehow stealthy, into the back-room and taken the child. And she turned mad-like when they tried to take it from her.

"An' what she saays is, Mr. Garvin, that you knaw all about it."

The high village road dropped to the lane. A mile off a solitary light shone in the Bottom. Coming from the village, they approached the house from the back, and Garvin saw that the light came from the long garret, Effy's garret, where the dead child had been laid.

Falshaw put the coffin in there and took Garvin to his wife's room.

Mrs. Falshaw lay in a big bed facing the door. A candle burned on the table beside her. A nurse sat at the head of the bed and Anny at the foot. Mrs. Falshaw lay slant-wise on her left side with her back

turned to them. The candle-light fell full on her and left the watchers in shadow.

Falshaw took Garvin by the arm and led him to the bedside. They stood there without speaking, made dumb by what they saw.

The bed-clothes were turned back a little on this side, and in the uncovered space the dead child, wrapped in a flannel, lay cradled in its mother's left arm. With her left hand she held it tight against her side, with her right she supported her own sagging breast and pressed the nipple to its shut mouth.

Her face, thinned and smoothed, refined beyond Garvin's recognition, brooded over the dead face, in the stillness, the stupefaction, of desire accomplished.

"It's Affy. It's little Affy," she said. "She's afeard to suck."

"Thot's how she keeps on," said Falshaw.

"She's afeard o' me. She's afeard of her mother. You speak to 'er, Mr. Garvin, and tell 'er not to be afeard."

Garvin bent over the body, and she whispered fiercely, "You tell little Affy, sir."

"Let me look," said Garvin.

Mrs. Falshaw closed her eyes. As Garvin laid his hand on the dead child she drew back a little. Her breast dropped from its dead lips.

"Now," he heard Falshaw muttering at his elbow. And some innermost voice in him replied, "Not yet."

"There's Affy now. Standing by the doorway."

Garvin saw her.

It was Anny who had spoken.

She rose, fascinated; and Falshaw turned. They stood motionless, gazing at Effy as she came. Their lips were parted slightly. It was evident that they felt no fear. They were charmed, rather, as at the approach of some wonderful, shining thing. (The nurse sat on, stolidly unconscious.)

"She's gone," said Anny.

She had passed out of their momentary vision. Her business was not with them.

She came—Garvin saw her—no longer solicitous, adventurous, but with a soft and terrible swiftness, an irresistible urgency.

As Garvin stooped suddenly and lifted the dead child from the bed, he saw Effy slide through his hands into its place. In Mrs. Falshaw's eyes there was neither fear nor any discernment of the substitution; yet she saw as he saw. She saw with sanity. Her arms pressed the impalpable creature, as it were flesh to flesh; and Garvin knew that Effy's passion was appeased.

EPILOGUE

A year later Garvin was on Dartmoor, working up Stone Circles for the County History. A letter from Mackinnon reached him there. It came as an answer to his wonder.

"There's a man in your trade living at Falshaw's. He doesn't see or

hear things; and he's there for nerves, too. They tell me nothing *has* been seen or heard since you left.

"Mrs. Falshaw often talks about you. I saw her the other day, and she desired, almost with tears, to be remembered to you. The point she insists on is that you are a good man. I'm inclined to think, Garvin, that you knew more about that woman than I ever did. She is, I ought to tell you, absolutely sane—has been ever since that night.

"There's a little thing that may interest you. In Mrs. Falshaw's room—you remember it?—they've got a picture, an enlarged photograph of the child Effy, framed and hung on the wall. Under it there's a shelf with her things—a cup she used to drink out of—some tin animals—a doll. They suggest votive offerings on an altar of the dead. What does it mean? Just remembrance? Or—some idea of propitiation?

"You ought to know."

He did

THE CLOCKS.

He lay in bed, shaking with terror. One of those strange, sudden unaccountable panics that overwhelmed him so often had seized him now. It was not only at night that they came; he had known them in the daylight when the sun had been shining brilliantly on to the uneven flags of the old stone court, and everything—the dark elms, the shining borders of flowers, the red and brown of the twisted, uneven roof had stood out in sharp, brilliant outline against the bluest of skies—even then he had felt afraid.

But it was at night that it came most frequently—or in these first grey hours of the early morning, when the shadows were creeping in flocks, strange shapes and outlines, over the floor.

It was like that now; the blank, dead square of the window stared across the room at him with no expression but only a dull, lifeless gaze, like the open eyes of a dead man. The room was almost dark, but the half-light gave strange shape to the furniture; the huge cupboard against the wall by the window flung vast shadows across the ceiling; the two chairs near the door seemed to his excited fancy to move—their legs multiplied and dwindled before his eyes; now there were four and two waved wildly in the air—now there was only one, and the chair hung foolishly forward as though it were about to fall.

His clothes, flung wildly across the iron railing at the foot of the bed, were monstrous; now they were a mountain, blocking out the grey window, and now, at every turn of the eye, they had dwindled to nothing at all, and the window stared at him again across the bare, uneven boards of the floor.

The door was a little open, so that a thin bar of light crept in from the passage; it was almost white against the grey, shadowy room, and it was on this light that his eyes were fixed.

He had woken suddenly with the thought that the gleam had gone; not that the door had closed; he could see that that was not so, but that someone or something had crossed it, blotting it out. To his wild brain this was no new thing; he had often watched the door with the same fear, but it was worse to wake up suddenly from a heavy, dreamless sleep and imagine it. It might have entered just before his waking—it might have been his entry that woke him—it might be in the room now; and he searched the room with staring eyes.

An old grandfather clock in the corner of the room ticked monotonously. He hated the sound of it; he hated the sound of any clock, and they had so many in the house. There was one on the stairs, with a high, shrill cry like the voice of his grandfather when he was angry, and there was one down below in the hall

that came up to him, softly and mysterious, like the hum of some enormous insect.

There were others in the house, and he always thought of them as live people, quite as much alive as his aunt and grandfather, Captain Bulstrode and Lizzie; indeed, at times he thought that it was only the clocks that were alive—the clocks and himself—and that one day they would march upon him, with their terrible buzzing noise, and kill him.

And now in the perfect silence of the house, with the grey dawn in the room, their voices seemed very loud, and they hid the stir that the Thing that had entered through the door would make. He did not know where it was, and he was afraid to look, but it would suddenly creep out upon him from behind the bed, and he could feel its long fingers twine about his neck and he could see its eyes gaze terribly into his.

His heart was beating so that the bedclothes shook above him and his forehead was wet; his hands had clutched the blanket and held it as though it were a talisman that would keep him safe.

Then suddenly from the courtyard came the crowing of a cock, and immediately his terror left him. That was Gabriel; he was always the first to crow. Soon there would be Hector, and, last of all, Robert; it must be nearly four, and it would soon be time for him to get up. He knew that the animals would be slowly waking, and the thought of their movements pleased him. There was company at last, and the gradually broadening light robbed the room of its fantastic terrors. He could see Gabriel, Hector, and Robert standing against the grey sky, watching solemnly the gradual approach of day. They were his best friends, kinder and more amusing than the people in the house; and he turned and fell into an uneasy, broken sleep.

When the grandfather's clock wheezed out four, he jumped from his bed and began to tumble on his clothes. For a moment he looked from the window into the courtyard below. There was Gabriel standing, sharp against the sky, on a ruined and crumbling wall that had once bound the garden. Already the sky was breaking, and white mists were creeping like serpents over the grass.

He stood, a wild and uncouth figure, at the window. His yellow hair, falling to his shoulders, was tangled, and yet held pieces of grass and leaves that had caught in it when he had lain, the evening before, on the hill beyond the house watching the setting sun. His head was enormous and all his features were exaggerated—his body looked as if it were of tremendous strength, his long arms shot from his miserable coat, his trousers scarcely extended below his knees, and his great fingers closed and unclosed, their muscles making reports like so many little guns. He sighed heavily, picked up the battered candlestick, on which the candle had guttered in the draught until it lurched fantastically to one side, and groped for the matches.

He found them at last, lit the candle, and crept softly into the passage. The noise of the clock in the hall stole up the staircase and surrounded him with a noise like the furious buzz of an insect.

"They're at it again," he said to himself, cross and angry. "They'll be up one day. They're angrier every week. I haven't done anything to you," he went on. "It ain't anything to do with me. I'd be afeared to touch you."

He crept, in his stockinged feet, down the stairs. He glanced furtively at the clock as he passed it, and clung to the further wall; the candle shook a little in his hand. The grey light was penetrating through the dim shutters of the house, and the dark outlines of the hall with its row of hats, absurdly alive in the dim glow, an umbrella stand with sticks that leant rakishly to one side, the end of the cloth that had escaped its nail beating dustily against the floor, blown by the little draught through the heavy front door—all these things he faced with hurried little gasps of fright and wide, saucer-like eyes.

To his hazy impression of things, these early morning hours, when he must light the fires and sweep the house, were full of horrors, and he faced the violent scoldings of his aunt and the cursings of Captain Bulstrode with far less fear. Those things were transient and ineffectual in their consequences, but the grey, ghostly mornings spread their mist about him throughout the weary length of the day.

By seven o'clock the fires were burning brightly, the table was laid for breakfast, the floors were swept, and Janet, slattern and virago, general servant and indifferent cook, was already scolding in the kitchen.

He stepped out of the house into the garden. The sun was beating down on the uneven stones of the court, and he could see Gabriel crowing for joy on the ruined wall. There were butterflies—white and red and blue—and in the corner, against the red stone of the house, a cloud of yellow daffodils were blowing gently in the little morning wind. But the moment of escape was a short one. Soon the shrill voice of his aunt called him, and he shuffled back into the house. Why was it that as soon as there were pleasant things in the world—butterflies and flowers and a warm golden sun—in an instant they were all snatched away and the world was grey again? There were so many things that were hard to understand!

They were all at breakfast when he returned; he saw their heads through the window as he passed; the straight, tightly-bound hair of his aunt, the bald, fat head of Captain Bulstrode on which the light would shine until you could see your face in it. He crept to his seat at the bottom of the table. There were never many words wasted at breakfast-time, and there was very little said now.

"Late as usual!" sharply from his aunt. "Why can't you come when it's time?"

She was a hard-featured woman who ran, on every possible

opportunity, into points—her nose, her ears, her head, her arms, they all had sharp edges; and the stiff, steely folds of her black dress and the little steel reticule at her waist were in keeping. Captain Bulstrode was red and fat—his neck was short and thick, his eyes tiny, his cheeks heavy and flushed. He had, a little, the air of a navy man run to seed.

By the large white-stone fireplace sat a very, very old man—Grandfather Tackity. He was so old and wrapt so thoroughly in rugs that it was difficult to see whether he were a man at all; he had been, as it were, extinguished by his wrappings, and the only thing that remained alive was the sharp yellow tip of a nose and two twinkling eyes. Occasionally he shuffled his feet, and two very wrinkled old hands were stretched outside the rug and held tremblingly a plate on which was a very small piece of bacon as withered as the old man himself.

He muttered continually to himself, and, at times, his voice rose in shrill expostulation. He finished the tiny piece of bacon and turned the plate upside down to see whether something might have possibly clung to the bottom.

"Well, Jane, my dear, just a leetle piece more for your poor old father—just a leetle, leetle bit, my dear; your poor old father's so hungry, and it was such a very, very leetle piece—and it's *all* gone, my dear, *all* gone. Deary me, the old man's so hungry—the poor old man! Just a leetle piece of bread, my dear, on this beautiful morning."

His grandson at the table watched him, and nodded every now and again by way of encouragement and sympathy. He was never quite sure what his grandfather might be—sometimes he was the devil, and sometimes the spirit of one of the clocks, and sometimes nothing at all—but he understood the hungry feeling, and was sorry.

The heap of rugs was violently agitated, and the plate fell with a crash to the ground.

"Dear me!" his voice rose in a little scream, his hands waved for a moment feebly in the air. Then a look of cunning flashed into the sharp eyes. Perhaps they hadn't heard at the table. The rugs were convulsed again as he tried to move his foot towards the broken plate to cover it. But his daughter *had* heard. She was up in a moment and had moved towards him. His eyes closed and his nose seemed to shrink; his hands crept beneath the rug. "Come, father," she said, "don't be so stupid now. Breakin' good china like that." She shook him up until he disappeared altogether, then she picked up the pieces of plate and returned to her place.

As she passed the fool at the table he had drawn his shoulders in and lowered his head as though he expected a blow, but she passed him without even glancing in his direction.

He continued to watch her furtively. There was trouble in the air, trouble on every side, and it came, he knew instinctively,

from her. The clocks were always louder in his ear when danger was at hand, and now he could hear them, it seemed to him, from every part of the house.

Captain Bulstrode pushed back his plate and leant over the table. His neck bulged beneath his collar, and the chair creaked as he moved. He whispered something to the woman, and she started back. "No, no," she said. "There are other ways."

He laughed coarsely, and wiped his mouth with his handkerchief. "Well," he said, "it's easy enough. . . . I don't know but it's been done before, yer see?"

The fool, watching his aunt, saw that she was different when she was looking at Cáptain Bulstrode. The sharp lines softened and there was light in her eyes; he wondered why. Fool though he was, he was wise enough to know that Captain Bulstrode was not beautiful.

"Damn them clocks!" said the Captain. "What do yer have so many for? With their filthy row"—he broke into muttering—"a fellow can't hear himself speak. . . . Wake the dead." The fool sympathised with that, but then the clocks knew what they were doing. They never ticked so loudly when there was nothing the matter. He wanted to press his hands into his ears to stop the noise that they made, but when he took them out again the sound hit him like a blow, and things were worse than ever.

Grandfather Tackity, having considered that the episode of the plate might be supposed to have passed, tried once more to attract his daughter's attention.

"Such a fine dahter! and such a leetle piece of bacon." He seemed to connect the two facts: Having such a beautiful daughter, *why* not a larger piece of bacon? "Your poor old father."

"Poor old father!" he repeated several times. But the two at the table were whispering, and paid no attention at all. She had leaned over and touched his arm, and was urging something, but he was slowly rolling his head from side to side; his eyes had disappeared altogether.

Pathos failing, the old man poked his head from the rugs and laughed—a very croaking, frog-like laugh that had little that was humorous in it.

"Oh! my dear! Your old father's so hungry! Dear me! You'd never guess how hungry he is! Such a hungry man, and such a leetle piece of bacon." He tried to raise himself in his chair, but collapsed and disappeared entirely. There were sounds of coughing from beneath the rugs, and at last he reappeared—his nose was purple.

"Drat you, father!" said his daughter, rising from the table. "Why can't you be quiet like a decent old man? I'd be ashamed—at your age, too."

She shook him up into his place again, and in reply to some

muttering: "No, yer can't have anything now—as late as it is, too. Yer greedy old man. I'd be ashamed——"

She opened the door and called for Lizzie, the servant. They began to clear the table. She turned suddenly on her nephew:

"Well? What are you standing about fer? Haven't yer got anything to do, yer great lazy lout, you? Get to work, now! Isn't it enough that we feed yer and clothe yer! Yer hulking fool that yer are!" He stood in front of her with his head lowered and his arm up—then he moved, slouching, away.

Bulstrode stood at the window and watched the old man with a smile on his lips. The old man, scarcely recovered from his shaking, was looking at the fire. Suddenly he felt that the other's eyes were upon him. He turned very slowly in his chair and faced him. The two men gazed at each other.

Bulstrode crossed the room and leant over the chair. "Tell us where it is," he said. "We won't touch it, but it's safer, you know . . . much safer."

"No, no!" The old man shook his head violently. "Yer shan't know—none of yer. Yer think yer so clever, but yer aren't. Yer shan't know."

Bulstrode frowned. "You'd better, you know," he said, softly. "It's safer——" Then he left the room.

Tackity beckoned his grandson to him.

"He's the Devil, you know," he said, in a hoarse whisper. "Such a clever devil, too! Oh! dear me! But I'm cleverer—*much* cleverer!" He chuckled.

"Is he really the Devil?" said the fool, looking at the door.

"Oh, dear me, yes—Old Tackity knows. He knows a thing or two." He continued to chuckle hoarsely like a watch that had run down and was being wound.

In the things that had to be done in the morning the fool generally forgot the rest of the world. The butterflies and the sun were lost behind the carrying of coals and the scolding of Lizzie and his aunt. But to-day everything was doubly heavy; the shadowy kingdom of his world was shot with strange colours, and the passages and stairs of the house were filled with figures that vanished mysteriously as he approached them. He had seen such shadows before—they had often met him and surrounded him in his dreams, and come to him in the first grey morning hours, but he had never known them so urgent in the glare of the daylight. From the wide window at the turn of the staircase the sun poured into the house; a great golden bee buzzed furiously against the pane, and a white mist of roses hung like a cloud in mid-air, with a burning sky of blue beyond. But the figures thronged the stairs and pressed upon him and touched his arm as he stood with his finger in his mouth watching the clock at the stair-head. "They're up to their mischief. *They* know. They never call out like that when there's nothing the matter. You devils! You devils!" He shook his great fist at the clock; then

he heard his aunt's step on the floor above, and crept about his work again.

At the mid-day dinner he watched his aunt and ate his food in frightened silence. They were talking at the end of the table, and it seemed that there was some dispute between them.

"No," she said, shaking her head violently. "There are other ways, I tell you. We'll find it out if we wait."

"I tell you I *can't* wait," he said, angrily. "I've waited here long enough. You're always telling me to wait. A man would think he could spend his time hanging round and waiting—as'f a fellow hadn't things to do. I tell yer I'm off to-morrow."

Her face went very white, and she clutched his arm. "No. You can't leave me like that. You wouldn't dare. You promised."

"Well, and *you* promised," he answered, roughly. "You said I should have it."

"*We* should have it," she caught him up eagerly. Then she went on quickly: "He isn't so well to-day. It won't be so long to wait—a week or two——"

"No—I'm sick of it," he said. "Waiting and waiting. He's got the life of Methuselah."

"Well, *he* suspects"—nodding her head in the direction of the fool. "He's had his eyes on us this long time. He's sharper than folk know."

"Well, he'd better not be," muttered Bulstrode. "That's all—he'd better not be. And what's it matter? A year or two less to his days. He's lived long enough, blast him!"

Old Tackity wasn't so well to-day. He wasn't so well as he'd been at breakfast. He took his little piece of beef without a murmur, finished it, and stared dismally into the fireplace. Every now and again he jerked his head round in a frightened way and glanced at the table, but he said nothing.

The afternoon was the fool's holiday. He wandered through the fields, up the hill, and down into the wood. There he was fascinated—frightened. The darkness and the silence terrified, but the colours, the little wind that blew the leaves across his feet, pleased him. But to-day there was utter silence. The leaves hung in so thick a tapestry overhead that the sun could not pierce them, and it was very dark. At his frightened ear seemed to crowd things that he could not see, and down the long silence of the forest-paths came the whispering patter of mysterious feet.

He fled back into the sunshine, fearing pursuers as he ran. He flung himself, panting, on to the side of the hill in the full glare of the sun, and watched the dark and sinister house, the high stone wall, the clustering gables, the enclosing trees. What were they doing there, he wondered? Had anything happened? Something was going to happen. He knew—the clocks had told him. Supposing it had happened already? He drew his coat up over his collar and waited throughout the afternoon. Then when the sun

grew low and the shadows slipped, like birds with trailing wings over the long golden breast of the corn, he returned. The house, with its thick walls and small diamond-paned windows, was already dark. A fire burned in the kitchen; the room was empty. He tossed his hair back from his forehead, and groped in the cupboard; he was hungry, he had been hungry all day, and if they would not give him anything, then he must take it. But the cupboard was empty, and a sound made him draw back in sudden alarm. It was the clocks again; he could hear their beat in every part of the house. There was one in the room there with him, and he watched its round, smooth face with growing fury. It was laughing at him—he could almost see the grin, and it mocked him for his ignorance. As he looked at it the madness surged in his brain, and suddenly he leapt at it, and with his fist broke the face. His hand was cut and began to bleed furiously; the glass fell with a little sound like a cry to the ground. He noticed the blood, and began to whimper. His face grew white with terror, for the hands had stopped, and the great pendulum had ceased to swing.

"What will it do? What will it do?" He cowered back against the wall and stared at it. It seemed to him that its grin had changed to a frown, and its silence frightened him more than its noise had done. With trembling knees and shaking hands he crept from the room and up the dark staircase. On the landing he paused to think. He must hide somewhere, for they were pursuing him; even now he thought that he could hear their footsteps. He turned blindly to the first door that was at hand and pushed it open. As he did so there was a sudden noise from every part of the house—all the clocks struck eight. He gave a little scream of terror; to him it sounded as though they were all calling to each other, bearing news of the thing that he had done. They knew, and they would follow him; and he stumbled blindly head-foremost into the room. The place was thick with dust, so that he coughed and choked; at last he made out a dim lamp, and by the side of it, sitting propped up at the table, his grandfather.

At the sound of the opening door the old man cried out: "No, no—I tell you! It's no use your coming here! You devil! You devil! You devil!" Then he saw who it was. "Oh, my poor flesh!" he said, "it's you, is it? Oh! I'm glad it's only you. I thought it was the other. Deary me, what a shock for an old man!"

"Let me in," said the fool, coming close to him. "Let me in. They're after me. They're coming up the stairs."

"Oh, they won't come in here," said Tackity, confidently. "I'm too clever for 'em by half. They can't do anything, they can't."

"I've killed one of them," said the fool, shivering. "I broke his face with my hand. See!" He held it up for the old man to see.

"That's right," said the other, nodding his head. "Brave boy! That's right!"

The fool crept into a corner, and at last he slept. His dreams were troubled, and he gave little cries, and he moved uneasily. Then suddenly he awoke. Someone was in the room. It was difficult to see because of the dim burning of the lamp. The old man was bending over the table, and in front of him was a great pile of round, yellow metal; he let it pass through his hands so that it tinkled and glittered as it fell in front of him. But it was not that that had awakened the fool. Someone had opened the door. Suddenly through the mist he saw the Captain; he would have screamed had not fear held him silent. He was stepping very silently, like a cat, and his face was white and his neck bulged over his collar.

The old man had not seen him; he was still murmuring to himself with pleasure at the sight in front of him. Then something warned him, and he turned round with a little cry.

"No, no!" he screamed. "You devil, you——"

But Bulstrode was upon him. He said nothing at all, but he caught the skinny throat between his hands and bent over it. Another little strangled scream, then the hands beat the air wildly for a moment, the face turned purple under the light of the lamp, and the head fell right back, crookedly, across his shoulder and stared at the fool.

Bulstrode looked for a moment at what he had done, then he began furiously to pour the gold into his pockets. He filled them all, and yet there was more; he filled his handkerchief and tied it; he found a box that was on the table, and he filled that. Then he crept from the room, locking the door after him.

The fool did not move. He did not understand what had happened. He sat crouched there for a long while, and then the head, leering at him so strangely with fixed and staring eyes, annoyed him.

"They're gone," he said, in a whisper. "They're gone, grandfather. Yer can move now." But old Tackity was silent.

Then the fool began to be frightened. "Grandfather! Grandfather!" he whispered. The light of the lamp jumped up and down and the shadows on the wall leaped with it. The house was absolutely still; he could not even hear the clocks. He moved from his corner and raised himself on his knees; he lifted his hand and, very gently, touched the old man's coat.

"Speak to me, grandfather," he said. "They're gone. He won't hurt you again. Oh! The shadows!" The oil had nearly failed in the lamp, and the flame flared up and died down like a jack-in-the box; the room seemed to jump with it. His hand touched the man's shoulder, and now it travelled down the sleeve. He stopped and let his fingers travel round the buttons—they were so hard and cold that he started for a moment. Then his fingers slipped off the coat and touched the back of the hand. The knotted veins stood out like iron, but the flesh was clammy and warm. His own hand

was suddenly frozen. He could not move it away, and he knelt there, rigid, with his eyes fixed in front of him.

The flame of the lamp gave a leap and for an instant the room was alive with light.

Everything sprang out of the darkness—the table, the shuttered windows, the dirty floor littered with papers and the unswept refuse of fifty years, and, at the last, for a moment, the white face, the crooked neck, the filmy eyes of the old man.

Then the lamp flickered out into darkness. The fool struggled to his feet, and, with little cries, his hand stretched before his face, he crept towards the door. Suddenly he stumbled. There was something in the way. He pushed it aside and knew that it was the leg of the dead man. The touch that he gave it brought it heavily to the floor.

He did not dare to move. He felt as though the body were on every side of him. He became wild with terror and there were strange noises in his ears. Suddenly he knew—it was the sound of the Clocks. They were coming up the stairs. The buzzing grew louder and louder. The room was filled with the sound.

He shouted "You devils!" and stumbled to his feet. He must get out, but the dead body stopped him—it stuck to him so that he dragged it with him as he moved.

Then they were upon him; the room was filled with them; their hands were at his throat, their cry was in his ears, their breath was on his cheek. He beat them off with his hands but they had him by the knees—they dragged him down and down——

When the grim silence of the house stirred an inquisitive attention, its doors were invaded.

In the dusty room at the head of the stairs they found the dead bodies of the fool and the old man lying, in a tangled heap, together.

H. S. WALPOLE.

The Long Chamber

BY OLIVIA HOWARD DUNBAR

THERE was perhaps no warrant for the vaguely swelling disquiet that possessed me from the moment that, late in the sultry August afternoon, there arrived the delayed telegram that announced the immediate coming of Beatrice Vesper.

. . . Beatrice Vesper abruptly on her way to me, and alone—it was the most strangely unlikely news. Yet I had no cause for real concern. She would find ready conveyance over the three steep miles from the railroad—our pleasantly decaying village being unlinked with the contemporary world. And, as the others reminded me, it wasn't as though the redundant spaciousness of Burleigh House didn't seem to invite, almost to select and compel, unaccustomed guests; or as though the Long Chamber, our supreme source of pride, hadn't that morning received the final touches that consecrated it to the utmost hospitality we could offer. As for Beatrice, she would delight in the survival of Burleigh House as unfailingly as she herself would prove its most harmonious ornament. And that matter of ornament wasn't one that David and I could be said to have taken at all lightly. How prodigally, how passionately, we had spent our love and labor on the precious house, in the months since it had so unexpectedly fallen into our hands—only to admit to each other, at the end of it all, in almost hysterical dismay, that the stately interiors seemed always empty, however vociferously we strove to be at home in them. There were void, waiting spaces that not the sum of all our alien, cheerful presences could fill. We had achieved a background, but a background for brilliant life; and it was as though we, living in terms of the palest prose, defiled past it almost invisibly. The truth was that we had established no spiritual tenancy, and that we didn't, ourselves, belong there. But though I was far from guessing with what mysterious tentacles the past would seize her, I knew that Beatrice Vesper would belong.

It was plain enough, however, from the first sight of my old friend, that she had come to me in no unhappy stress. Her secure and unvexed air was for an instant disconcerting; I had, in my panic, so prepared myself for haggard pathos. And indeed it was almost incredible that the hurrying, untender years should not have bruised so delicate a creature. With swiftly relaxing nerves I surrendered to the flattery of her explanation that when, only the day before, her husband had been summoned to Europe by cable—she herself being kept behind by the important final proof-reading of a technical work of Dr. Vesper's, to be published in the early autumn—she had from all her social resources chosen Burleigh House as her temporary refuge. . . . So that, after all, it seemed stupid to have taken fright. Beatrice and I had been the closest companions in earlier days. And doubtless I had exaggerated those conditions of her life which, for years past, had led her friends into the way of speaking of her ruefully, reminiscently, almost as if she were dead.

It was in this latter spirit that I had been speaking of her to David, only the day before, picturing her as the only woman I knew whose marriage had been complete self-immolation. Those of us who wore our fetters with a more modern jauntiness had resented, from our ill-informed distance, what seemed to be her slavish submission. She might as well have been chained in a cave—the rest of the world had not a glimpse of her. Dr. Vesper—a mild enough tyrant in appearance—did not care for society, so they had literally no visitors. There prevailed a legend that he was the most miserable of dyspeptics; and that Beatrice devoted most of her time to pre-

paring the unheard-of substances that fed him. His financial concerns—for important mining interests had sprung from the geological work in which he had become famous—kept him in the city throughout the year, and Beatrice had never left him for a day, even in torrid midsummer.

But David, who is sturdily unmodern, refused to be astonished. "Why not, if she's in love with him?" he asked.

"But she's not," I insisted "or—she wasn't. It's her husband who's in love, and with the most unheard-of concentration. He has cared for her ever since she was a child, so the thing hung over her—though I suppose that's not a romantic way of putting it—for years before they were married. So isn't it rather extreme for her to relinquish everything else in the world for the sake of the man she merely—likes?"

David may have submitted a discreet version of this to our old friend Anthony Lloyd, who had been with us all that summer, and I imagine that in consequence both men looked to find in Beatrice Vesper the dull, heavy-domestic type. So when, an hour after her arrival, they saw her vivid smile and smooth black hair and her young, slim figure in its mulberry-colored taffeta against the dark panels of our candle-lighted dining-room, they both bore very definite evidence of response to her loveliness. Anthony even betrayed his admiration a shade too markedly, for he had rather an assured way of paying court to women who attracted him. But his advance was deftly and unmistakably cut off. Beatrice Vesper's wifely attitude remained true, I saw, to its severely classic pattern.

However, pitfalls of this order were easily avoided, teased as we all were by the irresistible topic of our dazzling inheritance. And David was shortly embarked upon his familiar contention that we cared much more for the place than if he had been the direct heir and we had been able to anticipate the glory of ownership.

"Oh, we're very humble," David conceded, "but we do claim credit as resuscitators. That's what we've really felt ourselves to be doing for months—breathing life into a beautiful thing that had been left for dead. And it has begun to live again, don't you think, in a feeble way? But it's as showmen that we're so shockingly deficient. You see a house that Judge Timothy Burleigh built in 1723 and that was continuously lived in until they deserted it a generation ago, must—well, must have its secrets. But we have to admit we don't know them!"

"Oh, do you think you *can* live here without knowing?" Beatrice broke out with an intensity that surprised us all. "You'll divine them, if you learn them in no other way. Family traditions can never be smothered, you know—they cling too imperishably!"

"But the legend famine has already been relieved," Anthony announced, "or we assume that it has. At least, we've found a group of old trunks, filled with papers, and they've all been assigned to me, to dig secrets from. I'm going to begin in the morning."

"It's not that Molly and I haven't longed to dig for ourselves," David hastily defended us, "but we haven't had time. And as for divination—our imaginations lack the necessary point of departure because our cousins have kept all the portraits. That's the really serious gap, you'll notice, in our conscientious furnishing—that apparently we've sprung from the soil, that we haven't an ancestor. Though of course we have seen the old pictures, long ago, or I have."

"Oh, what were they—" Beatrice began.

"Mrs. Vesper, need you ask?" Anthony interrupted. "Wigged men with heavy, hawk-nosed faces—"

"And meek-eyed women," David assented, laughing. "Yes, they do look like that, mostly. The Burleighs were a formidable race and their wives must have been unnaturally submissive."

"But that's according to the Colonial portrait-painter's conventions," Anthony argued. "The very earliest of your portraits must have been painted less than two hundred years ago. Well, that's time enough for fashions in portraits to change; but do human beings alter essentially? The old Burleighs cannot have been so different, inside their Colonial purple and fine linen, from



Drawn by Harry Townsend

"OF COURSE, THEY HAD TO DIE," BEATRICE BROKE IN

you and Molly. Your hawk-nosed grandfathers must have enjoyed a joke, now and then, and those meek-eyed Patiences and Charities—mustn't they have had their emotions?"

"There must be conditions so harsh that emotions remain latent," I suggested, carelessly.

But Anthony never missed an occasion to dogmatize, after his own fashion: "I admit there are temperaments that cannot love, for instance. But to those that can the opportunity doesn't fail."

"But surely," he roused me to protest, "there is a type of woman who never learns her own capacity, who remains ingenuous, undeveloped—"

"Only until her appointed time," Anthony extravagantly persisted.

"What you are trying to express," David flouted, "is the old-fashioned school-girlish belief in predestined lovers. And perhaps it has remained for you to explain what happens in case the predestined lover dies!"

"In that case he'll come back from the dead to teach her!" But this point was made amid a shout of laughter, and we all conceded that the subject had been carried as far as it could be.

Almost immediately after dinner, Beatrice confessing that she was very tired, I rather self-consciously took a pewter candlestick from its stand in the lower hall and guided her up-stairs. And I found myself weakly unable to bid her good night without a fond proprietary emphasis on the treasures of the Long Chamber, its ancient oaken chests and still more ancient powdering-table, its carved bed and woven counterpane, even the long mirror, faintly time-blurred, in which we had been told that Anne Burleigh, the first mistress of the house, used once to contemplate her charming face and towering head-dress.

"Then, of course, it contains her image still." Beatrice's smiling, confident glance seemed to penetrate with singular ease the delicate clouds with which two centuries had lightly flecked the glass. "I shall see it, of course, after she gets used to me. I wonder if this was her room?"

"That is one of the thousand things we don't know," I lamented. "But it may well have been. It is the finest, we think, of all the rooms. Judge Timothy's lovely young wife *should* have had it!"

"Don't you think it's almost heartless to have preserved her mere possessions," Beatrice admonished me, "and yet allow the memories of her life to be so scattered? We must gather them up and piece them together!"

"Reconstruction ought not to be too difficult in her case," I laughed. "I imagine she was a simple creature."

It was our household custom to breakfast in our rooms, and after that to pursue our independent occupations throughout the greater part of the day. But Beatrice's proof-sheets and documents, which were of the most inordinate bulk, and which further depressingly renewed themselves by express every few days, often consumed her evenings likewise. It had struck me that we might achieve an arid semblance of friendly intercourse if she would assign to me some clerkly and mechanical part of her labors. But I saw from her look that it was as though I had asked a priestess to delegate to me her hieratic function. Her fealty to her dingy religion of ink and paper and chemical symbols was inflexible. And unreasoning, I thought, since it had cost her the look of freshness and vigor she had worn on coming to us. The thing was consuming her—her altered face told the story. Two weeks, indeed, after she had come, I realized that we had not yet had a comfortable talk together. What, after all, did I know of this new Beatrice, except that her highly decorative presence justified our otherwise empty splendor, and that for her own part she was working herself into an illness. She had come to us, she said, for rest and country peace and a season of friendship, but it was patent to the point of irony that she was profiting by none of these. And I did confess to myself, I remember, a secret hurt that there were so many days when she was unable, or ostensibly so, to join us at the hour of frank idleness when we took our tea under the oak-tree on the lawn, and when we always, sooner or later, fell to talking of our somewhat shadowy guest.

"Is it I whom Mrs. Vesper is avoiding?" Anthony asked, rather wistfully, one afternoon. "I'll admit I didn't

seize her tone directly she arrived, but I have it now—completely! She would find me irreproachable if she would only mingle with us a little. How comforting it would be if she had a human liking for tennis and riding!"

"My dear Anthony, I don't think she knows you are under the same roof, except when she sees you at dinner," I assured him. "But she's under the thrall of an inhuman husband who is overworking her from the other end of the world and practically denying us any share in her."

"Are you so sure it's overwork," David demanded, "and not the beginning of typhoid? She does look downright ill, you know. My own impulse would be to send for a doctor. Could there be anything unwholesome about the house—any eighteenth-century germ that has escaped our scourings?"

We all brooded for a moment on the possibility this opened.

"Do you think distraction would help her?" Anthony asked. "Because I have it here!"—he tapped his breast-pocket, triumphantly. "I've patched together in the last few days a good part of the history of Burleigh House. I had meant not to tell you yet, but secrecy is consuming me."

"Dole the stories out to us one at a time," David lazily suggested, his interest half-paralyzed by the sheer weight of the August atmosphere. We'll inaugurate a series of Nights—if not a Thousand and One, then as many as you please. And you'll begin to-night, of course. Can you go as far back as Judge Timothy?"

"Yes—if you would rather begin there. Though I hadn't planned—"

"Then it's settled," I interrupted. And this was indeed so precisely what we had all been thirstily waiting for that I thought it a sufficient pretext for disturbing Beatrice on the spot. Moreover, David's hints had freshly stimulated my own smoldering anxiety in regard to my friend. I had been too passive—I should have forced her to spare herself. The unnamable fears that I had felt on the day of her arrival recurred and pierced me.

In the Long Chamber I found her rather wearily putting away her work for the day. She stood by her table, a slender, drooping figure with a sheaf of fluttering papers in her hand, and faced me—still without the look of affectionate welcome I had so missed of late; merely with a sweet patience and courtesy. I should perhaps have approached my end by gentle, gradual arts, but my concern for her abruptly overflowed in unconsidered words. I begged her to admit to me that she wasn't well, that I might insist on proper care for her. I blamed bitterly my own laxity in allowing her to wear herself out as she had done. The publication of her husband's book on a certain day could not, I urged, be a matter so imperative that she must sacrifice her youth, her life, to it. By every obligation of our old friendship I implored her to intrust herself to me—and I laid especial stress on my responsibility to her absent husband.

"You were all vigor and loveliness when you came to us," I reminded her. "And now—now—you are so changed!"

She looked at me in a half-startled fashion as I said this, and a dim, ambiguous smile trembled on her lips.

"Yes—he will find me changed." She spoke thoughtfully, but quite without emphasis. "But that is something I must face alone."

If she had said no more than this she would have left me with the impression that the distant Dr. Vesper was a subtler Bluebeard. And indeed a look of secrecy and dread that I now for the first time caught flowing darkly over her candid face was wretchedly that of the wife who has opened the forbidden door and is haunted by the intolerable knowledge that must shortly betray her. Could it, after all, be a worse than physical suffering that was draining her eyes of their look of life? She had begun to move uneasily about, and I felt that she would have been glad to have me leave her. But unable longer to endure the intervening shield, I made a desperate effort to demolish it, to force her reluctant confidence; and with hot cheeks and trembling voice I stammered crude, disconnected sentences on the frequent failure of men to understand women and situations, . . . on the indulgence with which we were forced to regard many masculine traits. . . .

"Oh, you have thought that?" she interrupted me, almost shrilly—"that my husband caused me suffering? Why, Molly, I supposed you knew, that *everybody* knew, how utterly, stainlessly good he is. It is I, oh, always I, who fall short." She took my hand gently. "You must not go until I have told you how it is." And we sat down together.

Much of what she then told me I did indeed already know, but under a different complexion from that with which she now invested it—how at nineteen she had married Edward Vesper almost frivolously, with no sense of sacredness, lightly assuming—though this was, of course, true enough—that she was bestowing a blessing by becoming the wife of the man for whom she felt a merely childlike affection. How, afterward, she had discovered that the marriage had been urged, hurried, by her poor, desperate mother, who, with four younger children, was at the end of everything; and how Dr. Vesper's money had supported them all ever since. . . .

"Then I saw," Beatrice slowly went on, after a little, though I saw what the words were costing her, "how narrowly my own foolish ignorance had saved me from baseness. I had married for my own advantage a man who gave me perfect love. Facing this, I saw that from that moment I was bound to give more than I had ever dreamed of giving. And that, if I couldn't love my husband as he so wonderfully loved me, I must at least offer him the most sedulous counterfeit I could muster. That the least abatement of unremitting devotion would be treachery. . . . Well, that has been my life, and always, until now, I have known that no woman could do more—"

She would have gone on, the momentum of an impulsive confidence is so great, but at that point the maid came in search of me, announcing dinner. So, after a violent flurry of dressing, Beatrice and I contrived, ten minutes later, to be with the others in the dining-room. The disclosure she had made to me, with its intensely characteristic light on the apparent enigmas of her marriage, seemed for the time to have loosed a painful restraint. She talked with gentle gaiety, exchanging swift jests with the imperturbable Anthony, for whom I knew she had come to have a genuine liking, and seeming humanly at home with all of us, rather than driven, as one could fancy her latterly to have been, by some invisible harriers.

It even seemed natural and expected when, after dinner, Beatrice, who had so often spent her evenings alone, chose to seat herself at the old spinet and coax from it a few dim spectral chords.

"There's the prelude for your story, Anthony," David remarked when she had finished.

"It's a perfect one," Anthony declared. "Those are, of course, the very sounds with which Anne Burleigh beguiled her solemn days."

I had caught a note in his voice that awed me a little. "Anne Burleigh—you're to tell us of her! Then it won't, of course, be a cheerful story. Why is it that it has always been she, rather than any of the others, for whom our hearts have vaguely ached?"

"Cheerful? But of course not," Anthony rejoined with energy. "It can't be that you wanted me to discover simple tales of domestic lethargy. That isn't the sort of thing that leaves its impress on a family—and a house. That wouldn't be a story."

Then, as we urged him to begin, he altered his tone and turned to David a serious face. "You'll have to understand," he said, "that I'm taking a great liberty—with you and with your ancestors. This story that I've made out and that I'll repeat to you is, as a matter of fact, very largely—inferred. It's by no means an explicit tradition. But the inference seems to me so plain—and after living here in the house it is, oddly, so credible—and, well, you must forgive me if, after all, you prefer to leave the inference unformulated."

None of us spoke; and I let my sewing drop in my lap.

"As you know," Anthony began, "Judge Timothy Burleigh married Anne Steele when she was seventeen. A year or two afterward, when they were living in this new and splendid Burleigh House, Sophia Steele, the young wife's sister, came to pay a visit. In this young girl's diary, which tells so much else, and which I've had the astonishing fortune to discover, she records her impression

of her sister, who looked 'very maidenly, though the wife of so great a man and the mistress of so fine a house.' But I won't read you her crabbed little sentences—you can see them for yourselves later; I'll simply try to make a connected story. . . .

"Judge Timothy does not appear to have markedly played the lover to his charming little bride, but Sophia heard him praise her for her obedience, saying that it was the prime virtue in a wife. I had supposed that the housewives of that day had exacting responsibilities, but possibly because it was so fine a thing to be the Judge's wife, or else because her youth exempted her, little Mistress Burleigh seems to have had abundant leisure. She would play the spinet for hours at a time or she would sit with her baby boy—"

"The boy must have been Colonel Jonathan," David, who has always been rather too fond of facts, interposed. "Anne Burleigh had but one child."

"You see her, don't you, as I do," Anthony went on, "forlorn little Maeterlinckian heroine, treated as a child by her husband and practising rigidly the submission he exacted of her? It must have been a dull household, in spite of the splendid entertaining that took place at intervals, or sister Sophia wouldn't have had so much leisure to write in her diary. And it must have been an unnatural one, or—the climax wouldn't have flamed so suddenly. Something had to happen in such a house—and it did happen, as I make out, when a young relative of the Burleighs from Virginia came North to seek advancement in the law through his distinguished relative, the Judge. This young man, Brian Calvert, was asked to Burleigh House as a guest. It is very plain that he was keenly admired from the first by little sister Sophia, who meticulously describes his height and beauty and 'merry manners.' The Judge, I imagine, did not diffuse much merriment through the house. But the Virginian probably didn't see little Sophia; his attention was too completely and frankly absorbed. So she stayed apart, a sad, involuntary little spy, not critical or even fully comprehending, but vaguely and innocently envious, I gather, of an unknown mysterious thing with which the air about her had suddenly become surcharged. Anne Burleigh herself, poor child, was doubtless almost as far from understanding what had befallen her. At all events, there seems to have been no concealment. Anne and Calvert spent long days together, sitting under the trees in the garden. No one knows whether he said a word of love to her—I could almost believe that he did not. But the young, innocent creatures were none the less firmly in the grasp of the elemental force that was about to shatter them. It may have been love of the kind that absolutely cannot yield to reason, and that could never adapt itself to a slow cooling and decline—"

"Of course, they had to die," Beatrice Vesper broke in. "One cannot love like that—and live."

Her voice held somber secrets. It was as though she were speaking of something intimately real. I tried to see her face, but the shadow veiled it.

Anthony paused for a moment as though he, too, were amazed at her interruption. "Yes," he said, "there had to be a tragic issue. . . . The happenings of a certain day were told long after, but vaguely, in Sophia's journal. Perhaps the child herself only suspected. . . . One day Brian Calvert was ill and remained in his room. When evening came Anne suggested taking some supper to him. The Judge reminded her, and rather ungently, that such an errand was for a servant to perform. . . . An hour later she burst into her sister's bedroom in a passion of fear. She had for the first time eluded and disobeyed her husband, taking to Calvert's room a porringer of gruel that she had made herself. The Judge, whom she doubtless supposed busy with his books, heard her step, followed her, and, entering the room a moment later, discovered her in Calvert's arms. I am sure they had never kissed before, but to her husband this was no extenuation. The Judge forced Anne from the room. Listening outside, she heard the sound of swords—and more—and worse. . . . Brian Calvert was never seen again. Anne Burleigh herself fell ill, and a few months later she died."

I felt that we had heard as much as



Drawn by Harry Townsend Engraved by Frank E. Pettit

"THERE IS SOMETHING THAT LIVES ON HERE, IN THIS ROOM"

we could bear, but David did not understand my signal, and advanced his literal and perfectly reasonable inquiry:

"Are you sure that Calvert was killed?"

"Entirely sure," Anthony said, a little dryly, "though there isn't a shadow of proof. Can you imagine such a husband hesitating or failing of his purpose?"

"You believe that they fought each other in this house?" David went on, in his solemn effort to realize the thing. "And there is no record of it? But where can it have been? You don't know that, of course?"

"Yes, I know," Anthony admitted, slowly. "It was in the guest-room. They called it the Long Chamber."

"The Long Chamber!" David repeated. And he turned toward Beatrice his honest, unperceiving eyes.

Beatrice had been sitting motionless. Now she rose hastily. "Why should you feel it tragic that he died?" she demanded, almost with brusqueness, but without looking at any one of us. "He would have chosen it. It was no unwilling death—that much I know." Her voice, usually so calm, was roughened with agitation. "I have stayed too long," she added. "I am very tired and should have gone earlier. But the story held us so."

She was gone before I had found words to detain her, and we all sat silent. Then Anthony said:

"I felt it before I had half finished the story. I know it now. *She has seen Calvert's ghost!*"

"That's preposterous!" David exclaimed.

"Because you haven't seen it yourself?" our friend inquired, quietly. "But, my dear David, have you ever slept in that room? And in any case what would the ghost of that young lover have to say to you?"

"Or to Beatrice Vesper, for that matter?" I added.

Anthony shrugged his shoulders. "Who knows?" he said. "I admit that if it were the usual family specter, I can't conceive her risking a second encounter. But Calvert's apparition—that might perhaps be less formidable. . . . Still, it's all much queerer than I like—and I'm not even sure I want her to tell."

David began to be troubled. "Molly, you know her. We don't. Is she so infernally secretive? Could she see a ghost in our house without telling us? And why shouldn't she tell?"

I sat brooding, conscious that I was trembling a response to every lightest breath of air. There were secrets about; the troubled atmosphere was heavy with them. Something had happened to Beatrice, as any one but my dear dull David could have seen. But since we three were so blindly in the dark, how and whence could it have come? Anthony was, of course, uncommonly astute, yet I had no curiosity as to the guesses I saw him shrewdly elaborating. He did not know Beatrice's sound, unassailable simplicity as I knew it.

We were all, indeed, unnaturally alert, tensely awaiting we knew not what, so that when the door-bell rang we all started as though the sound had some portentous significance—holding our breath, fairly, until the maid came in with an envelope which she said was for Mrs. Vesper.

"It's a cable," I said. "I'll take it up to her."

A half-hour must have passed since she had gone up-stairs, yet when I knocked she came to her door fully dressed. When she saw the envelope she asked me to stay until she had read the message—which was, she told me, a moment later, from her husband. He was sailing and would arrive in a week.

With a sense of relief that was almost disloyal I welcomed this definite, prosaic event. At least it would dissipate the vapors that had gathered.

"Can't we send for him to come directly here?" I suggested. "Must you meet him in New York when it is so hot and you're not really well?"

She laid her hand gently on my arm, instinctively trying to soften the harsh abruptness of what she was about to say.

"Why shouldn't I tell you? I shall never see him again."

The words sounded so unreasoning that I felt myself growing literally cold. "But, dear Beatrice—it was such a little time ago—in this very room—that you told me—"

"Of his goodness and his love. And of the obligations they imposed on me. But now—if I can't fully meet them—if I'm not the same—"

Her phrases were still without meaning to me. I tried vaguely to protest. "But your courage—"

"Oh, I had courage—for a lifetime. But I was mercifully blindfolded. Now, when I *know*—"

Anthony's confident statement recurred to me, precipitating dim suspicions, intimations, of my own.

"Beatrice, what is it that you have learned to know?" I demanded, firmly. "What is it that you have—seen?"

She cast a quick glance toward the old mirror, dull-rimmed, garlanded, in which she had gaily told me that she expected to see Anne Burleigh's child-like face. "Seen?" she repeated. "Oh, dear Molly, it's not alone what I have *seen*. . . . But there is something that lives on here, in this room, of which I merely knew the name. . . . I have felt it almost from the first moment. And there have been hours when I have so shared in it—when I have lived with an intensity I had never dreamed of—"

"Beatrice,"—I pressed her for something more definite—"you have seen Anne Burleigh?"

"Oh, it's not she who has left the deathless element," Beatrice said. "It's the man who loved her, who loved so well that he did not need to live. You see his love was so complete that it gained an earthly immortality of its own. It is here—now. I did not know such things could be. And, oh, Molly, I have tried *not* to know! You have seen how I have struggled to fill up my time and thought with work. I have not welcomed this other new thing, I have shrunk from it. But it has seized me and stripped my eyes and dazzled them—and I know what love can be."

"Brian Calvert has taught you!" I could not help the words. And, in spite of me, they sounded like an accusation.

"If it were only a lesson I could unlearn," she answered, quietly. "If I could only forget the sweet terror of it all."

"The terror of dreams and visions? But, dear Beatrice, that fades and vanishes."

"It is already vanished. But not before it has changed me past all helping. You can see how, after this, I can never—*pretend* to love."

I did not try to press her further, for I hoped that the next day, when Anthony's story would be less vivid to us all, I could prevail on the desperation of her attitude. I did insist, however, that she should not spend the night alone, and she consented, after a little, that I should sleep with her. Or so, at least, we termed it. But my patient vigil told me plainly enough that poor Beatrice slept no more than I. It is true that I assumed—though how could I be sure?—that I had dispelled her disturbing phantasms. I did not, though I lay there expectant at her side, feel the clutch at my own heart of Brian Calvert's strangely inextinguishable love; and though in the first few pale moments of dawn I saw Beatrice's strained eyes bent steadily on Anne Burleigh's garlanded mirror, to me its unrevealing surface presented merely a reticent blur.

It did not surprise me when, an hour later, Beatrice told me that she must leave Burleigh House that morning. And indeed it seemed that to let her go—out of the reach of the ghostliness that had so preyed upon her sensitive spirit—was, at that critical moment, the best that I could do for her. Yet, strangely, even after all that she had told me, I did not guess into what utter darkness she was going. Immune as I then believed myself to spectral invasions of my own serenity, I did not know at that time, nor until long after, how the reverberations of spent lives may sometimes sound so loud as to muffle the merely human cry. All that Beatrice Vesper saw and felt as she sat in the Long Chamber and battled ineffectually with the insistent presence, or presences, that may have abided within the distances of the dim, garlanded mirror, is still, I know, beyond my vain conjecture. And there are certain bare and almost intolerable facts that seem indeed to close the door on such imaginings. . . . For Edward Vesper never saw his wife again, and a month after Beatrice's going word came to me that she was dead. We have closed the Long Chamber for all time.

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The Coming of the Terror

By ARTHUR MACHEN

Author of "The Bowmen," etc.

Decorations by Wilfred Jones

AFTER two years we are turning once more to the morning's news with a sense of appetite and glad expectation. There were thrills at the beginning of the war, the thrill of horror and of a doom that seemed at once incredible and certain. This was when Namur fell, and the German host swelled like a flood over the French fields, and drew very near to the walls of Paris. Then we felt the thrill of exultation when the good news came that the awful tide had been turned back, that Paris and the world were safe, for a while, at all events.

Then for days we hoped for more news as good as this or better. Has Kluck been surrounded? Not to-day, but perhaps he will be surrounded to-morrow. But the days became weeks, the weeks drew out to months; the battle in the West seemed frozen. People speculated as to the reason of this inaction: the hopeful said that Joffre had a plan, that he was "nibbling"; others declared that we were short of munitions, others again that the new levies were not yet ripe for battle. So the months went by, and almost two years of war had been completed before the motionless English line began to stir and quiver as if it awoke from a long sleep, and began to roll onward, overwhelming the enemy.

THE secret of the long inaction of the British armies has been well kept. On the one hand it was rigorously protected by the censorship, which, severe, and sometimes severe to the point of absurdity, became in this particular matter ferocious. As soon as the real significance of that which was happening was perceived by the authorities, an underlined circular was issued to the newspaper proprietors of Great Britain and Ireland. It warned each proprietor that he might impart the contents of this circular to one other person only, such person being the responsible editor of his paper, who was to keep the communication secret under the severest penalties. The circular forbade any mention of certain events that had taken place, that might take place; it forbade any kind of reference to these events or any hint of their existence. The subject was not to be referred to in conversation, it was not to be hinted at, however obscurely, in letters; the very existence of the circular, its subject apart, was to be a dead secret.

Now, a censorship that is sufficiently

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minute and utterly remorseless can do amazing things in the way of hiding what it wants to hide. Once one would have thought otherwise; one would have said that, censor or no censor, the fact of the murder at X—— would certainly become known, if not through the press, at all events through rumor and the passage of the news from mouth to mouth. And this would be true of England three hundred years ago. But we have grown of late to such a reverence for the printed word and such a reliance on it that the old faculty of disseminating news by word of mouth has become atrophied. Forbid the press to mention the fact that Jones has been murdered, and it is marvelous how few people will hear of it, and of those who hear how few will credit the story that they have heard.

And, then, again, the very fact of these vain rumors and fantastic tales having been so widely believed for a time was fatal to the credit of any stray mutterings that may have got abroad.

Before the secret circular had been issued my curiosity had somehow been aroused by certain paragraphs concerning a "Fatal Accident to Well-known Airman." The propeller of the airplane had been shattered, apparently by a collision with a flight of pigeons; the blades had been broken, and the machine had fallen like lead to the earth. And soon after I had seen this account, I heard of some very odd circumstances relating to an explosion in a great munition factory in the Midlands. I thought I saw the possibility of a connection between two very different events.

It has been pointed out to me by friends who have been good enough to read this record that certain phrases I have used may give the impression that I ascribe all the delays of the war on the Western front to the extraordinary circumstances which occasioned the issue of the secret circular. Of course this is not the case; there were many reasons for the immobility of our lines from October, 1914, to July, 1916. We could undertake to supply the defects of our army both in men and munitions *if* the new and incredible danger could be overcome. It has been overcome,—rather, perhaps, it has ceased to exist,—and the secret may now be told.

I have said my attention was attracted by an account of the death of a well-known airman. I have not the habit of preserving cuttings, I am sorry to say, so that I cannot be precise as to the date of this event. To the best of my belief it was either toward the end of May or the beginning of June, 1915. The manner in which Western-Reynolds met his death struck me as extraordinary. He was brought down by a flight of pigeons, as appeared by what was found on the blood-stained and shattered blades of the propeller. An eye-witness of the accident, a fellow-officer, described how Western-Reynolds set out from the aërodrome on a fine afternoon, there being hardly any wind. He was going to France.

" 'Wester' rose to a great height at once, and we could scarcely see the machine. I was turning to go when one of the fellows called out: 'I say! What 's this?' He pointed up, and we saw what looked like a black cloud coming from the south at a tremendous rate. I saw at once it was n't a cloud; it came with a swirl and a rush quite different from any cloud I 've ever seen. It turned into a great crescent, and wheeled and veered about as if it was looking for something. The man who had called out had got his glasses, and was staring for all he was worth. Then he shouted that it was a tremendous flight of birds, 'thousands of them.' They went on wheeling and beating about high up in the air, and we were watching them, thinking it was interesting, but not supposing that they would make any difference to 'Wester,' who was just about out of sight. Then the two arms of the crescent drew in as quick as lightning, and these thousands of birds shot in a solid mass right up there across the sky, and flew away. Then Henley, the man with the glasses, called out, 'He 's down!' and started running, and I went after him. We got a car, and as we were going along Henley told me that he 'd seen the machine drop dead, as

if it came out of that cloud of birds. We found the propeller-blades all broken and covered with blood and pigeon-feathers, and carcasses of the birds had got wedged in between the blades, and were sticking to them."

It was, I think, about a week or ten days after the airman's death that my business called me to a Northern town, the name of which, perhaps, had better remain unknown. My mission was to inquire into certain charges of extravagance which had been laid against the munition-workers of this special town. I found, as usual, that there was a mixture of truth and exaggeration in the stories that I had heard.

"And how can you be surprised if people will have a bit of a fling?" a worker said to me. "We 're seeing money for the first time in our lives, and it 's bright. And we work hard for it, and we risk our lives to get it. You 've heard of explosion yonder?"

He mentioned certain works on the outskirts of the town. Of course neither the name of the works nor that of the town had been printed; there had been a brief notice of "Explosion at Munition Works in the Northern District: Many Fatalities." The working-man told me about it, and added some dreadful details.

"'They would n't let their folks see bodies; screwed them up in coffins as they found them in shop. The gas had done it."

"Turned their faces black, you mean?"

"Nay. They were all as if they had been bitten to pieces."

This was a strange gas.

I asked the man in the Northern town all sorts of questions about the extraordinary explosion of which he had spoken to me, but he had very little more to say. As I have noted already, secrets that may not be printed are often deeply kept; last summer there were very few people outside high official circles who knew anything about the "tanks," of which we have all been talking lately, though these strange instruments of war were being exercised and tested in a park not far from London.

I gave him up, and took a tram to the



district of the disaster, a sort of industrial suburb, five miles from the center of the town. When I asked for the factory, I was told that it was no good my going to it, as there was nobody there. But I found it, a raw and hideous shed, with a walled yard about it, and a shut gate. I looked for signs of destruction, but there was nothing. The roof was quite undamaged; and again it struck me that this had been a strange accident. There had been an explosion of sufficient violence to kill people in the building, but the building itself showed no wounds or scars.

A man came out of the gate and locked it behind him. I began to ask him some sort of question, or, rather, I began to "open" for a question with "A terrible business here, they tell me," or some such phrase of convention. I got no further. The man asked me if I saw a policeman walking down the street. I said I did, and I was given the choice of getting about my business forthwith or of being instantly given in charge as a spy. "Th' 'ast better be gone, and quick about it," was, I think, his final advice, and I took it.

It was a day or two later that the accident to the airman Western-Reynolds came into my mind. For one of those instants which are far shorter than any measure of time there flashed out the possibility of a link between the two disasters. But here was a wild impossibility, and I drove it away. And yet I think that the thought, mad as it seemed, never left me;

it was the secret light that at last guided me through a somber grove of enigmas.

It was about this time, so far as the date can be fixed, that a whole district, one might say a whole county, was visited by a series of extraordinary and terrible calamities, which were the more terrible inasmuch as they continued for some time to be inscrutable mysteries. It is indeed doubtful whether these awful events do not still remain mysteries to many of those concerned; for before the inhabitants of this part of the country had time to join one link of evidence to another the circular was issued, and thenceforth no one knew how to distinguish undoubted fact from wild and extravagant surmise.

The district in question is in the far west of Wales; I shall call it, for convenience, Meirion. Here, then, one sees a wild and divided and scattered region, a land of outland hills and secret and hidden valleys.

Such, then, in the main is Meirion, and on this land in the early summer of last year terror descended—a terror without shape, such as no man there had ever known.

It began with the tale of a little child who wandered out into the lanes to pick flowers one sunny afternoon, and never came back to the cottage on the hill. It was supposed that she must have crossed the road and gone to the cliff's edge, possibly in order to pick the sea-pinks that were then in full blossom. She must have slipped, they said, and fallen into the sea, two hundred feet below. It may be said at once that there was no doubt some truth in this conjecture, though it stopped far short of the whole truth. The child's body must have been carried out by the tide, for it was never found.

The conjecture of a false step or of a fatal slide on the slippery turf that slopes down to the rocks was accepted as being the only explanation possible. People thought the accident a strange one, because, as a rule, country children living by the cliffs and the sea become wary at an early age, and the little girl was almost ten years old. Still, as the neighbors said, "That 's how it must have happened; and it 's a great pity, to be sure." But this would not do when in a week's time a strong young laborer failed to come to his cottage after the day's work. His body was found on the rocks six or seven miles from the cliffs where the child was supposed to have fallen; he was going home by a path that he had used every night of his life for eight or nine years, that he used on dark nights in perfect security, knowing every inch of it. The police asked if he drank, but he was a teetotaler; if he was subject to fits, but he was n't. And he was not murdered for his wealth, since agricultural laborers are not wealthy. It was only possible again to talk of slippery turf and a false step; but people began to be frightened. Then a woman was found with her neck broken at the bottom of a disused quarry near Llanfihangel, in the middle of the county. The false-step theory was eliminated here, for the quarry was guarded by a natural hedge of gorse. One would have to struggle and fight through sharp thorns to destruction in such a place as this; and indeed the gorse was broken, as if some one had rushed furiously through it, just above the place where the woman's body was found. And this also was strange: there was a dead sheep lying beside her in the pit, as if the woman and the sheep together had been chased over the brim of the quarry. But chased by whom or by what? And then there was a new form of terror.

This was in the region of the marshes under the mountain. A man and his son, a lad of fourteen or fifteen, set out early one morning to work, and never reached the farm whence they were bound. Their way skirted the marsh, but it was broad, firm, and well metalled, and it had been raised about two feet above the bog. But when search was made in the evening of the same day, Phillips and his son were found dead in the marsh, covered with black slime and pond-weed. And they lay some ten yards from the path, which, it would seem, they must have left deliberately. It was useless, of course, to look

for tracks in the black ooze, for if one threw a big stone into it, a few seconds removed all marks of the disturbance. The men who found the two bodies beat about the verges and purlieus of the marsh in hope of finding some trace of the murderers; they went to and fro over the rising ground where the black cattle were grazing, they searched the alder-thickets by the brook: but they discovered nothing.

Most horrible of all these horrors, perhaps, was the affair of the Highway, a lonely and unfrequented by-road that winds for many miles on high and lonely land. Here, a mile from any other dwelling, stands a cottage on the edge of a dark wood. It was inhabited by a laborer named Williams, his wife, and their three children. One hot summer's evening a man who had been doing a day's gardening at a rectory three or four miles away passed the cottage, and stopped for a few minutes to chat with Williams, who was pottering about his garden, while the children were playing on the path by the door. The two talked of their neighbors and of the potatoes till Mrs. Williams appeared at the doorway and said supper was ready, and Williams turned to go into the house. This was about eight o'clock, and in the ordinary course the family would have had their supper and be in bed by nine, or by half-past nine at the latest. At ten o'clock that night the local doctor was driving home along the Highway. His horse shied violently and then stopped dead just opposite the gate to the cottage. The doctor got down, and there on the roadway lay Williams, his wife, and the three children, stone-dead. Their skulls were battered in as if by some heavy iron instrument; their faces were beaten into a pulp.

It is not easy to make any picture of the horror that lay dark on the hearts of the people of Meirion. It was no longer possible to believe or to pretend to believe that these men and women and children had met their deaths through strange accidents. For a time people said that there must be a madman at large, a sort of country variant of Jack the Ripper, some horrible pervert who was possessed by the passion of death, who prowled darkling about that lonely land, hiding in woods and in wild places, always watching and seeking for the victims of his desire.

Indeed, Dr. Lewis, who found poor Williams, his wife, and children, was convinced at first that the presence of a concealed madman in the country-side offered the only possible solution to the difficulty.

"I felt sure," he said to me afterward, "that the Williamses had been killed by a homicidal maniac. It was the nature of the poor creatures' injuries that convinced me that this was the case. Those poor people had their heads smashed to pieces by what must have been a storm of blows. Any one of them would have been fatal, but the murderer must have gone on raining blows with his iron hammer on people who were already stone-dead. And *that* sort of thing is the work of a madman, and nothing but a madman. That 's how I argued the matter out to myself just after the event. I was utterly wrong, monstrously wrong; but who could have suspected the truth?"

I quote Dr. Lewis, or the substance of him, as representative of most of the educated opinion of the district at the beginnings of the terror. People seized on this theory largely because it offered at least



the comfort of an explanation, and any explanation, even the poorest, is better than an intolerable and terrible mystery. Besides, Dr. Lewis's theory was plausible; it explained the lack of purpose that seemed to characterize the murders.

And yet there were difficulties even from the first. It was hardly possible that

a strange madman would be able to keep hidden in a country-side where any stranger is instantly noted and noticed; sooner or later he would be seen as he prowled along the lanes or across the wild places.

Then another theory, or, rather, a variant of Dr. Lewis's theory, was started. This was to the effect that the person responsible for the outrages was indeed a madman, but a madman only at intervals. It was one of the members of the Porth Club, a certain Mr. Remnant, who was supposed to have originated this more subtle explanation. Mr. Remnant was a middle-aged man who, having nothing particular to do, read a great many books by way of conquering the hours. He talked to the club—doctors, retired colonels, parsons, lawyers—about "personality," quoted various psychological text-books in support of his contention that personality was sometimes fluid and unstable, went back to "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" as good evidence of this proposition, and laid stress on *Dr. Jekyll's* speculation that the human soul, so far from being one and indivisible, might possibly turn out to be a mere polity, a state in which dwelt many strange and incongruous citizens, whose characters were not merely unknown, but altogether unsurmised by that form of consciousness which rashly assumed that it was not only the president of the republic, but also its sole citizen.

However, Mr. Remnant's somewhat crazy theory became untenable when two more victims of an awful and mysterious death were offered up in sacrifice, for a man was found dead in the Llanfihangel quarry where the woman had been discovered, and on the same day a girl of fifteen was found broken on the jagged rocks under the cliffs near Porth. Now, it appeared that these two deaths must have occurred at about the same time, within an hour of one another, certainly, and the distance between the quarry and the cliffs by Black Rock is certainly twenty miles.

And now a fresh circumstance or set of circumstances became manifest to confound judgment and to awaken new and wild surmises; for at about this time people realized that none of the dreadful events that were happening all about them was so much as mentioned in the press. Horror followed on horror, but no word was printed in any of the local journals. The curious went to the newspaper offices, —there were two left in the county,—but found nothing save a firm refusal to discuss the matter. Then the Cardiff papers were drawn and found blank, and the London press was apparently ignorant of the fact that crimes that had no parallel were terrorizing a whole country-side. Everybody wondered what could have happened, what was happening; and then it was whispered that the coroner would allow no inquiry to be made as to these deaths of darkness.

Clearly, people reasoned, these government restrictions and prohibitions could only refer to the war, to some great danger in connection with the war. And that being so, it followed that the outrages which must be kept so secret were the work of the enemy; that is, of concealed German agents.

It is time, I think, for me to make one point clear. I began this history with certain references to an extraordinary accident to an airman whose machine fell to the ground after collision with a huge flock of pigeons, and then to an explosion in a Northern munition factory of a very singular kind. Then I deserted the neighborhood of London and the Northern district, and dwelt on a mysterious and terrible series of events which occurred in the summer of 1915 in a Welsh county, which I have named for convenience Meirion.

Well, let it be understood at once that all this detail that I have given about the occurrences in Meirion does not imply that the county in Wales was alone or specially afflicted by the terror that was over the land. They tell me that in the villages about Dartmoor the stout Devonshire hearts sank as men's hearts used to sink in the time of plague and pestilence. There was horror, too, about the Norfolk Broads, and far up by Perth no one would venture on the path that leads by Scone to the

wooded heights above the Tay. And in the industrial districts. I met a man by chance one day in an odd London corner who spoke with horror of what a friend had told him.

"'Ask no questions, Ned,' he says to me, 'but I tell yow a was in Bairnigan t' other day, and a met a pal who 'd seen three hundred coffins going out of a works not far from there.'"

Then there was the vessel that hovered outside the mouth of the Thames with all sails set, and beat to and fro in the wind, and never answered any signals and showed no light. The forts shot at her, and brought down one of the masts; but she went suddenly about, stood down channel, and drove ashore at last on the sand-banks and pine-woods of Arcachon, and not a man alive on her, but only rattling heaps of bones! That last voyage of the *Semiramis* would be something horribly worth telling; but I heard it only at a distance as a yarn, and believed it only because it squared with other things that I knew for certain.

This, then, is my point: I have written of the terror as it fell on Meirion simply because I have had opportunities of getting close there to what really happened.

Well, I have said that the people of that far Western county realized not only that death was abroad in their quiet lanes and on their peaceful hills, but that for some reason it was to be kept secret. And so they concluded that this veil of secrecy must somehow be connected with the war; and from this position it was not a long way to a further inference that the murderers of innocent men and women and children were either Germans or agents of Germany. It would be just like the Huns, everybody agreed, to think out such a devilish scheme as this; and they always thought out their schemes beforehand.

It all seemed plausible enough; Germany had by this time perpetrated so many horrors and had so excelled in devilish ingenuities that no abomination seemed too abominable to be probable or too ingeniously wicked to be beyond her tortuous malice. But then came the questions as to who the agents of this terrible design were, as to where they lived, as to how they contrived to move unseen from field to field, from lane to lane. All sorts of fantastic attempts were made to answer these questions, but it was felt that they remained unanswered. Some suggested that the murderers landed from submarines, or flew from hiding-places on the west coast of Ireland, coming and going by night; but there were seen to be flagrant impossibilities in both these suggestions. Everybody agreed that the evil work was no doubt the work of Germany; but nobody could begin to guess how it was done.

It was, I suppose, at about this time when the people were puzzling their heads as to the secret methods used by the Germans or their agents to accomplish their crimes that a very singular circumstance became known to a few of the Porth people. It related to the murder of the Williams family on the Highway in front of their cottage door. I do not know that I have made it plain that the old Roman road called the Highway follows the course of a long, steep hill that goes steadily westward till it slants down toward the sea. On each side of the road the ground falls away, here into deep shadowy woods, here into high pastures, but for the most part into the wild and broken land that is characteristic of Arfon.

Now, on the lower slopes of it, beneath the Williams cottage, some three or four fields down the hill, there is a military camp. The place has been used as a camp for many years, and lately the site has been extended and huts have been erected; but a considerable number of the men were under canvas here in the summer of 1915.

On the night of the Highway murder this camp, as it appeared afterward, was the scene of the extraordinary panic of horses.

A good many men in the camp were asleep in their tents soon after 9:30. They woke up in panic. There was a thundering sound on the steep hillside above them, and down upon the tents came half a dozen horses, mad with fright, trampling

the canvas, trampling the men, bruising dozens of them, and killing two.

Everything was in wild confusion, men groaning and screaming in the darkness, struggling with the canvas and the twisted ropes, and some of them, raw lads enough, shouting out that the Germans had at last landed.

Some of the men had seen the horses galloping down the hill as if terror itself was driving them. They scattered off into the darkness, and somehow or other found their way back in the night to their pasture above the camp. They were grazing there peacefully in the morning, and the only sign of the panic of the night before was the mud they had scattered all over themselves as they pelted through a patch of wet ground. The farmer said they were as quiet a lot as any in Meirion; he could make nothing of it.

Then two or three other incidents, quite as odd and incomprehensible, came to be known, borne on chance trickles of gossip that came into the towns from outland farms. And in such ways it came out that up at Plas Newydd there had been a terrible business over swarming the bees; they had turned as wild as wasps and much more savage. They had come about the people who were taking the swarms like a cloud. They settled on one man's face so that you could not see the flesh for the bees crawling over it, and they had stung him so badly that the doctor did not know whether he would get well; they had chased a girl who had come out to see the swarming, and settled on her and stung her to death. Then they had gone off to a brake below the farm and got into a hollow tree, and it was not safe to go near it, for they would come out at you by day or by night.

And much the same thing had happened, it seemed, at three or four farms and cottages where bees were kept. And there were stories, hardly so clear or so credible, of sheep-dogs, mild and trusted beasts, turning as savage as wolves and injuring the farm boys in a horrible manner, in one case, it was said, with fatal results. It was certainly true that old Mrs. Owens's favorite Dorking cock had gone mad. She came into Porth one Saturday morning with her face and her neck all bound up and plastered. She had gone out to her bit of field to feed the poultry the night before, and the bird had flown at her and attacked her most savagely, inflicting some very nasty wounds before she could beat it off.

"There was a stake handy, lucky for me," she said, "and I did beat him and beat him till the life was out of him. But what is come to the world, whatever?"

Now Remnant, the man of theories, was also a man of extreme leisure. He was no more brutal than the general public, which revels in the details of mysterious crime; but it must be said that the terror, black though it was, was a boon to him. He peered and investigated and poked about with the relish of a man to whose life a new zest has been added. He listened attentively to the strange tales of bees and dogs and poultry that came into Porth with the country baskets of butter, rabbits, and green peas, and he evolved at last a most extraordinary theory. He went one night to see Dr. Lewis.

"I want to talk to you," he said to the doctor, "about what I have called provisionally the Z-ray."

Dr. Lewis, smiling indulgently, and quite prepared for some monstrous piece of theorizing, led Remnant into the room that overlooked the terraced garden and the sea.

"I suppose, Lewis, you 've heard these extraordinary stories of bees and dogs and things that have been going about lately?"

"Certainly I have heard them. I was called in at Plas Newydd, and treated Thomas Trevor, who 's only just out of danger, by the way. I certified for the poor child, Mary Trevor. She was dying when I got to the place."

"Well, then there are the stories of good-tempered old sheep-dogs turning wicked and 'savaging' children."

"Quite so. I have n't seen any of these cases professionally; but I believe the stories are accurate enough."

"And the old woman assaulted by her own poultry?"

"That 's perfectly true."

"Very good," said Mr. Remnant. He spoke now with an italic impressiveness, *"Don't you see the link between all this and the horrible things that have been happening about here for the last month?"*

Lewis stared at Remnant in amazement. He lifted his red eyebrows and lowered them in a kind of scowl. His speech showed traces of his native accent.

"Great burning!" he exclaimed, "what on earth are you getting at now? It is madness. Do you mean to tell me that you think there is some connection between a swarm or two of bees that have turned nasty, a cross dog, and a wicked old barn-door cock, and these poor people that have been pitched over the cliffs and hammered to death on the road? There 's no sense in it, you know."

"I am strongly inclined to believe that there is a great deal of sense in it," replied Remnant, with extreme calmness. "Look here, Lewis, I saw you grinning the other day at the club when I was telling the fellows that in my opinion all these outrages had been committed, certainly by the Germans, but by some method of which we have no conception. Do you see my point?"

"Well, in a sort of way. You mean there 's an absolute originality in the method? I suppose that is so. But what next?"

Remnant seemed to hesitate, partly from a sense of the portentous nature of what he was about to say, partly from a sort of half-unwillingness to part with so profound a secret.

"Well," he said, "you will allow that we have two sets of phenomena of a very extraordinary kind occurring at the same time. Don't you think that it 's only reasonable to connect the two sets with one another?"

"So the philosopher of Tenterden steeple and the Goodwin Sands thought, certainly," said Lewis. "But what is the connection? Those poor folks on the Highway were n't stung by bees or worried by a dog. And horses don't throw people over cliffs or stifle them in marshes."

"No; I never meant to suggest anything so absurd. It is evident to me that in all these cases of animals turning suddenly savage the cause has been terror, panic, fear. The horses that went charging into the camp were mad with fright, we know. And I say that in the other instances we have been discussing the cause was the same. The creatures were exposed to an infection of fear, and a frightened beast or bird or insect uses its weapons, whatever they may be. If, for example, there had been anybody with those horses when they took their panic, they would have lashed out at him with their heels."

"Yes, I dare say that that is so. Well?" demanded the doctor.

"Well, my belief is that the Germans have made an extraordinary discovery. I have called it the Z-ray. You know that the ether is merely an hypothesis; we have to suppose that it 's there to account for the passage of the Marconi current from one place to another. Now, suppose that there is a psychic ether as well as a material ether, suppose that it is possible to direct irresistible impulses across this medium, suppose that these impulses are toward murder or suicide; then I think that you have an explanation of the terrible series of events that have been happening in Meirion for the last few weeks. And it is quite clear to my mind that the horses and the other creatures have been exposed to this Z-ray, and that it has produced on them the effect of terror, with ferocity as the result of terror. Now, what do you say to that? Telepathy, you know, is well established; so is hypnotic suggestion. Now don't you feel that putting telepathy and suggestion together, as it were, you have more than the elements of what I call the Z-ray? I feel that I have more to go on in making my hypothesis than the inventor of the steam-engine had in making his hypothesis when he saw the lid of the kettle bobbing up and down. What do you say?"

Dr. Lewis made no answer. He was

watching the growth of a new, unknown tree in his garden.

It was a dark summer night. The moon was old and faint above the Dragon's Head, on the opposite side of the bay, and the air was very still. It was so still that Lewis had noted that not a leaf stirred on the very tip of a high tree that stood out against the sky; and yet he knew that he was listening to some sound that he could not determine or define. It was not the wind in the leaves, it was not the gentle wash of the water of the sea against the rocks; that latter sound he could distinguish easily. But there was something else. It was scarcely a sound; it was as



if the air itself trembled and fluttered, as the air trembles in a church when they open the great pedal pipes of the organ.

The doctor listened intently. It was not an illusion, the sound was not in his own head, as he had suspected for a moment; but for the life of him he could not make out whence it came or what it was. He gazed down into the night, over the terraces of his garden, now sweet with the scent of the flowers of the night; tried to peer over the tree-tops across the sea toward the Dragon's Head. It struck him suddenly that this strange, fluttering vibration of the air might be the noise of a distant aëroplane or airship; there was not the usual droning hum, but this sound might be caused by a new type of engine. A new type of engine? Possibly it was an enemy airship; their range, it had been said, was getting longer, and Lewis was just going to call Remnant's attention to the sound, to its possible cause, and to the possible danger that might be hovering over them, when he saw something that caught his breath and his heart with wild amazement and a touch of terror.

He had been staring upward into the sky, and, about to speak to Remnant, he had let his eyes drop for an instant. He looked down toward the trees in the garden, and saw with utter astonishment that one had changed its shape in the few hours that had passed since the setting of the sun. There was a thick grove of ilexes bordering the lowest terrace, and above them rose one tall pine, spreading its head of sparse branches dark against the sky.

As Lewis glanced down over the terraces he saw that the tall pine-tree was no longer there. In its place there rose above the ilexes what might have been a greater ilex; there was the blackness of a dense growth of foliage rising like a broad, far-spreading, and rounded cloud over the lesser trees.

Dr. Lewis glared into the dimness of the night, at the great, spreading tree that he knew could not be there. And as he gazed he saw that what at first appeared the dense blackness of foliage was fretted and starred with wonderful appearances of lights and colors.

The night had gloomed over; clouds obscured the faint moon and the misty stars. Lewis rose, with some kind of warning and inhibiting gesture to Remnant, who, he was aware, was gaping at him in astonishment. He walked to the open French window, took a pace forward on the path outside, and looked very intently at the dark shape of the tree. He shaded the light of the lamp behind him by holding his hands on each side of his eyes.

The mass of the tree—the tree that could n't be there—stood out against the sky, but not so clearly now that the clouds had rolled up. Its edges, the limits of its leafage, were not so distinct. Lewis thought that he could detect some sort of quivering movement in it, though the air

was at a dead calm. It was a night on which one might hold up a lighted match and watch it burn without any wavering or inclination of the flame.

"You know," said Lewis, "how a bit of burned paper will sometimes hang over the coals before it goes up the chimney, and little worms of fire will shoot through it. It was like that, if you should be standing some distance away. Just threads and hairs of yellow light I saw, and specks and sparks of fire, and then a twinkling of a ruby no bigger than a pin-point, and a green wandering in the black, as if an emerald were crawling, and then little veins of deep blue. 'Woe is me!' I said to myself in Welsh. 'What is all this color and burning?'

"At that very moment there came a thundering rap at the door of the room inside, and there was my man telling me that I was wanted directly up at the Garth, as old Mr. Trevor Williams had been taken very bad. I knew his heart was not worth much, so I had to go off directly, and leave Remnant alone to make what he could of it all."

Dr. Lewis was kept some time at the Garth. It was past twelve when he got back to his house. He went quickly to the room that overlooked the garden and the sea, threw open the French window, and peered into the darkness. There, dim indeed against the dim sky, but unmistakable, was the tall pine, with its sparse branches, high above the dense growth of the ilex-trees. The strange boughs which had amazed him had vanished; there was no appearance of colors or of fires.

The doctor did not say anything about the strange tree to Remnant. When they next met, he said that he had thought there was a man hiding among the bushes. This was in explanation of that warning gesture he had used, and of his going out into the garden and staring into the night. He concealed the truth because he dreaded the Remnant doctrine that would undoubtedly be produced; indeed, he hoped that he had heard the last of the theory of the Z-ray. But Remnant firmly reopened this subject.

"We were interrupted just as I was putting my case to you," he said. "And to sum it all up, it amounts to this: the Huns have made one of the great leaps of science. They are sending 'suggestions' (which amount to irresistible commands) over here, and the persons affected are seized with suicidal or homicidal mania. In my opinion Evans was the murderer of the Williams family. You know he said he stopped to talk to Williams. It seems to me simple. And as for the animals,—the horses, dogs, and so forth,—they, as I say, were no doubt panic-stricken by the ray, and hence driven to frenzy."

"Why should Evans have murdered Williams instead of Williams murdering Evans? Why should the impact of the ray affect one and not the other?"

"Why does one man react violently to a certain drug, while it makes no impression on another man? Why is A able to drink a bottle of whisky and remain sober, while B is turned into something very like a lunatic after he has drunk three glasses?"

"It is a question of idiosyncrasy," said the doctor.

Lewis escaped from the club and from Remnant. He did not want to hear any more about that dreadful ray, because he felt sure that the ray was all nonsense. But asking himself why he felt this certi-



tude in the matter, he had to confess that he did n't know. An aëroplane, he reflected, was all nonsense before it was made.

But he thought with fervor of the extraordinary thing he had seen in his own garden with his own eyes. How could one fail to be afraid with great amazement at the thought of such a mystery?

Dr. Lewis's thoughts were distracted from the incredible adventure of the tree by the visit of his sister and her husband. Mr. and Mrs. Merritt lived in a well-known manufacturing town of the Midlands, which was now, of course, a center of munition work. On the day of their arrival at Porth, Mrs. Merritt, who was tired after the long, hot journey, went to bed early, and Merritt and Lewis went into the room by the garden for their talk and tobacco. They spoke of the year that had passed since their last meeting, of the weary dragging of the war, of friends that had perished in it, of the hopelessness of an early ending of all this misery. Lewis said nothing of the terror that was on the land. One does not greet with a tale of horror a tired man who is come to a quiet, sunny place for relief from black smoke and work and worry. Indeed, the doctor saw that his brother-in-law looked far from well. He seemed "jumpy"; there was an occasional twitch of his mouth that Lewis did not like at all.

"Well," said the doctor, after an interval of silence and port wine, "I am glad to see you here again. Porth always suits you. I don't think you 're looking quite up to your usual form; but three weeks of Meirion air will do wonders."

"Well, I hope it will," said the other. "I am not up to the mark. Things are not going well at Midlingham."

"Business is all right, is n't it?"

"Yes; but there are other things that are all wrong. We are living under a reign of terror. It comes to that."

"What on earth do you mean?"

"It 's not much. I did n't dare write it. But do you know that at every one of the munition-works in Midlingham and all about it there 's a guard of soldiers with drawn bayonets and loaded rifles day and night? Men with bombs, too. And machine-guns at the big factories."

"German spies?"

"You don't want machine-guns and bombs to fight spies with."

"But what against?"

"Nobody knows. Nobody knows what is happening," Merritt repeated, and he went on to describe the bewilderment and terror that hung like a cloud over the great industrial city in the Midlands; how the feeling of concealment, or some intolerable secret danger that must not be named, was worst of all.

Merritt made a sort of picture of the great town cowering in its fear of an unknown danger.

"There 's a queer story going about," he said, "as to a place right out in the country, over the other side of Midlingham. They 've built one of the new factories out there, a great red brick town of sheds. About two hundred yards from this place there 's an old footpath through a pretty large wood, most of it thick undergrowth. It 's a black place of nights.

"A man had to go this way one night. He got along all right till he came to the wood, and then he said his heart dropped out of his body. It was awful to hear the noises in that wood. Thousands of men were in it, he swears. It was full of rustling, and pattering of feet trying to go dainty, and the crack of dead boughs lying on the ground as some one trod on them, and swishing of the grass, and some sort of chattering speech going on that sounded, so he said, as if the dead sat in their bones and talked! He ran for his life, anyhow, across fields, over hedges, through brooks. He must have run, by his tale, ten miles out of his way before he got home to his wife, beat at the door, broke in, and bolted it behind him."

"There is something rather alarming about any wood at night," said Dr. Lewis.

Merritt shrugged his shoulders.

"People say that the Germans have landed, and that they are hiding in underground places all over the country."

Lewis gasped for a moment, silent in contemplation of the magnificence of rumor. The Germans already landed, hiding underground, striking by night, secretly, terribly, at the power of England! It was monstrous, and yet—

"People say they 've got a new kind of poison-gas," continued Merritt. "Some think that they dig underground places and make the gas there, and lead it by se-

cret pipes into the shops; others say that they throw gas bombs into the factories. It must be worse than anything they 've used in France, from what the authorities say."

"The authorities? Do *they* admit that there are Germans in hiding about Midlingham?"

"No. They call it 'explosions.' But we know it is n't explosions. We know in the Midlands what an explosion sounds like and looks like. And we know that the people killed in these 'explosions' are put into their coffins in the works. Their own relations are not allowed to see them."

"And do you believe in the German theory?"

"If I do, it 's because one must believe in something. Some say they 've seen the gas. I heard that a man living in Dunwich saw it one night like a black cloud, with sparks of fire in it, floating over the tops of the trees by Dunwich Common."

The light of an ineffable amazement came into Lewis's eyes. The night of Remnant's visit, the trembling vibration of the air, the dark tree that had grown in his garden since the setting of the sun, the strange leafage that was starred with burning, and all vanished away when he returned from his visit to the Garth; and such a leafage had appeared as a burning cloud far in the heart of England. What intolerable mystery, what tremendous doom was signified in this? But one thing was clear and certain: the terror of Meirion was also the terror of the Midlands.

Merritt told the story of how a Swedish professor, Huvelius, had sold to the Germans a plan for filling England with German soldiers. Land was to be bought in certain suitable and well-considered places, Englishmen were to be bought as the apparent owners of such land, and secret excavations were to be made, till the country was literally undermined. A subterranean Germany, in fact, was to be dug under selected districts of England; there were to be great caverns, underground cities, well drained, well ventilated, supplied with water, and in these places vast stores both of food and of munitions were to be accumulated year after year till "the Day" dawned. And then, warned in time, the secret garrison would leave shops, hotels, offices, villas, and vanish underground, ready to begin their work of bleeding England at the heart.

"Well," said Lewis, "of course, it may be so. If it is so, it is terrible beyond words."

Indeed, he found something horribly plausible in the story. It was an extraordinary plan, of course, an unheard-of scheme; but it did not seem impossible. It was the Trojan Horse on a gigantic scale. And this theory certainly squared with what one had heard of German preparations in Belgium and in France.

And it seemed from that wonder of the burning tree that the enemy mysteriously and terribly present at Midlingham was present also in Meirion. Yet, he thought again, there was but little harm to be done in Meirion to the armies of England or to their munitionment. They were working for panic terror. Possibly that might be so; but the camp under the Highway? That should be their first object, and no harm had been done there.

Lewis did not know that since the panic of the horses men had died terribly in that camp; that it was now a fortified place, with a deep, broad trench, a thick tangle of savage barbed wire about it, and a machine-gun planted at each corner.

One evening the doctor was summoned to a little hamlet on the outskirts of Porth. In one of the cottages the doctor found a father and mother weeping and crying out to "Doctor Bach, Doctor Bach," two frightened children, and one little body, still and dead.

The doctor found that the child had been asphyxiated. His clothes were dry; it was not a case of drowning. There was no mark of strangling. He asked the father how it had happened, and father and mother, weeping most lamentably, declared they had no knowledge of how their child had been killed, "unless it was the People that had done it." The Celtic fairies are still malignant. Lewis asked

what had happened that evening; where had the child been?

"Was he with his brother and sister?" asked the doctor. "Don't they know anything about it?"

The children had been playing in the road at dusk, and just as their mother called them in one child had heard Johnnie cry out:

"Oh, what is that beautiful, shiny thing over the stile?"

They found the little body, under the ash-grove in the middle of the field. He was quite still and dead, so still that a great moth had settled on his forehead, fluttering away when they lifted him up.

Dr. Lewis heard this story. There was nothing to be done, little to be said to these most unhappy people.

"Take care of the two that you have left to you," said the doctor as he went away. "Don't let them out of your sight if you can help it. It is dreadful times that we are living in."

About ten days later a young farmer had been found by his wife lying in the grass close to the castle, with no scar on him or any mark of violence, but stone-dead.

Lewis was sent for, and knew at once, when he saw the dead man, that he had perished in the way that the little boy had perished, whatever that awful way might be.

It seemed that he had gone out at about half-past nine to look after some beasts. He told his wife he would be back in a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes. He did not return, and when he had been gone for three quarters of an hour Mrs. Cradock went out to look for him. She went into the field where the beasts were, and everything seemed all right; but there was no trace of Cradock. She called out; there was no answer.

She told the doctor:

"There was something that I could not make out at all. It seemed to me that the hedge did look different from usual. To be sure, things do look different at night, and there was a bit of sea mist about; but somehow it did look odd to me, and I said to myself, 'Have I lost my way, then?' "

She declared that the shape of the trees in the hedge appeared to have changed, and besides, it had a look "as if it was lighted up, somehow," and so she went on toward the stile to see what all this could be; and when she came near, everything was as usual. She looked over the stile and called, hoping to see her husband coming toward her or to hear his voice; but there was no answer, and glancing down the path, she saw, or thought she saw, some sort of brightness on the ground, "a dim sort of light, like a bunch of glow-worms in a hedge-bank.

"And so I climbed over the stile and went down the path, and the light seemed to melt away; and there was my poor husband lying on his back, saying not a word to me when I spoke to him and touched him."

So for Lewis the terror blackened and became altogether intolerable, and others, he perceived, felt as he did. He did not know, he never asked, whether the men at the club had heard of these deaths of the child and the young farmer; but no one spoke of them. Indeed, the change was evident; at the beginning of the terror men spoke of nothing else; now it had become all too awful for ingenious chatter or labored and grotesque theories. And Lewis had received a letter from his brother-in-law, who had gone back to Midlingham; it contained the sentence, "I am afraid Fanny's health has not greatly benefited by her visit to Porth; there are still several symptoms I don't at all like." This told him, in a phraseology that the doctor and Merritt had agreed upon, that the terror remained heavy in the Midland town.

It was soon after the death of Cradock that people began to tell strange tales of a sound that was to be heard of nights about the hills and valleys to the northward of Porth. A man who had missed the last train from Meiros and had been forced to tramp the ten miles between Meiros and

Porth seems to have been the first to hear it. He said he had got to the top of the hill by Tredonoc, somewhere between half-past ten and eleven, when he first noticed an odd noise that he could not make out at all; it was like a shout, a long-drawn-out, dismal wail coming from a great way off. He stopped to listen, thinking at first that it might be owls hooting in the woods; but it was different, he said, from that. He could make nothing of it, and feeling frightened, he did not quite know of what, he walked on briskly, and was glad to see the lights of Porth station. Then others heard it.

Let it be remembered again and again that all the while that the terror lasted there was no common stock of information as to the dreadful things that were being done. The press had not said one word upon it, there was no criterion by which the mass of the people could separate fact from mere vague rumor, no test by which ordinary misadventure or disaster could be distinguished from the achievements of the secret and awful force that was at work. And since the real nature of all this mystery of death was unknown, it followed easily that the signs and warnings and omens of it were all the more unknown. Here was horror, there was horror; but there were no links to join one horror with another, no common basis of knowledge from which the connection between this horror and that horror might be inferred.

The sound had been heard for three or perhaps four nights, when the people coming out of Tredonoc church after morning service on Sunday noticed that there was a big yellow sheep-dog in the churchyard. The dog, it appeared, had been waiting for the congregation; for it at once attached itself to them, at first to the whole body, and then to a group of half a dozen who took the turning to the right till they came to a gate in the hedge, whence a roughly made farm-road went through the fields, and dipped down into the woods and to Treff Loyne farm.

Then the dog became like a possessed creature. He barked furiously. He ran up to one of the men and looked up at him, "as if he were begging for his life," as the man said, and then rushed to the gate and stood by it, wagging his tail and barking at intervals. The men stared.

"Whose dog will that be?" said one of them.

"It will be Thomas Griffith's, Treff Loyne," said another.

"Well, then, why does n't he go home? Go home, then!" He went through the gesture of picking up a stone from the road and throwing it at the dog. "Go home, then! Over the gate with you!"

But the dog never stirred. He barked and whined and ran up to the men and then back to the gate. The farmer shook the dog off, and the four went on their way, and the dog stood in the road and watched them, and then put up its head and uttered a long and dismal howl that was despair.

Then it occurred to somebody, so far as I can make out with no particular reference to the odd conduct of the Treff Loyne sheep-dog, that Thomas Griffith had not been seen for some time past.

One September afternoon, therefore, a party went up to discover what had happened to Griffith and his family. There were half a dozen farmers, a couple of



policemen, and four soldiers, carrying their arms; those last had been lent by the officer commanding at the camp. Lewis, too, was of the party; he had heard by chance that no one knew what had become of Griffith and his family, and he was anxious about a young fellow, a painter, of his acquaintance who had been lodging at Treff Loyne all the summer.

They came to the gate in the hedge

where the farm-road led down to Treff Loyne. Here was the farm inclosure, the outlying walls of the yard and the barns and sheds and outhouses. One of the farmers threw open the gate and walked into the yard, and forthwith began bellowing at the top of his voice:

"Thomas Griffith! Thomas Griffith! Where be you, Thomas Griffith?"

The rest followed him. The corporal snapped out an order over his shoulder, and there was a rattling metallic noise as the men fixed their bayonets.

There was no answer to this summons; but they found poor Griffith lying on his face at the edge of the pond in the middle of the yard. There was a ghastly wound in his side, as if a sharp stake had been driven into his body.

It was a still September afternoon. No wind stirred in the hanging woods that were dark all about the ancient house of Treff Loyne; the only sound in the dim air was the lowing of the cattle. They had wandered, it seemed, from the fields and had come in by the gate of the farmyard and stood there melancholy, as if they mourned for their dead master. And the horses, four great, heavy, patient-looking beasts, were there, too, and in the lower field the sheep were standing, as if they waited to be fed.

Lewis knelt down by the dead man and looked closely at the gaping wound in his side.

"He 's been dead a long time," he said. "How about the family? How many are there of them? I never attended them."

"There was Griffith, and his wife, his son Thomas, and Mary Griffith, his daughter. And I do think there was a gentleman lodging with them this summer."

That was from one of the farmers. They all looked at one another, this party of rescue, who knew nothing of the danger that had smitten this house of quiet people, nothing of the peril which had brought them to this pass of a farm-yard, with a dead man in it, and his beasts standing patiently about him as if they waited for the farmer to rise up and give them their food. Then the party turned to the house. The windows were shut tight. There was no sign of any life or movement about the place. The party of men looked at one another.

They did not know what the danger was or where it might strike them or whether it was from without or from within. They stared at the murdered man, and gazed dismally at one another.

"Come," said Lewis, "we must do something. We must get into the house and see what is wrong."

"Yes, but suppose they are at us while we are getting in?" said the sergeant. "Where shall we be then, Doctor Lewis?"

The corporal put one of his men by the gate at the top of the farm-yard, another at the gate by the bottom, and told them to challenge and shoot. The doctor and the rest opened the little gate of the front garden and went up to the porch and stood listening by the door. It was all dead silence. Lewis took an ash stick from one of the farmers and beat heavily three times on the old, black, oaken door studded with antique nails.

There was no answer from within. He beat again, and still silence. He shouted to the people within, but there was no answer. They all turned and looked at one another. There was an iron ring on the door. Lewis turned it, but the door stood fast; it was evidently barred and bolted. The sergeant of police called out to open, but again there was no answer.

They consulted together. There was nothing for it but to blow the door open, and some one of them called in a loud voice to those that might be within to stand away from the door or they would be killed. And at this very moment the yellow sheep-dog came bounding up the yard from the woods and licked their hands and fawned on them and barked joyfully.

"Indeed, now," said one of the farmers, "he did know that there was something amiss. A pity it was, Thomas Williams, that we did not follow him when he implored us last Sunday."

The corporal disengaged his bayonet and shot into the keyhole, calling out once

more before he fired. He shot and shot again, so heavy and firm was the ancient door, so stout its bolts and fastenings. At last he had to fire at the massive hinges, and then they all pushed together, and at that the door lurched open suddenly and fell forward.

Young Griffith was lying dead before the hearth. They went on toward the parlor, and in the doorway of the room was the body of the artist Secretan, as if he had fallen in trying to get to the kitchen. Up-stairs the two women, Mrs. Griffith and her daughter, a girl of eighteen, were lying together on the bed in the big bedroom, clasped in each other's arms.

They went about the house, searched the pantries, the back kitchen, and the cellars; there was no life in it. There was no bread in the place, no milk, no water.

The group of men stood in the big kitchen and stared at one another, a dreadful perplexity in their eyes. The old man had been killed with the piercing thrust of some sharp weapon; the rest had perished, it seemed probable, of thirst; but what possible enemy was this that besieged the farm and shut in its inhabitants? There was no answer.

The sergeant of police spoke of getting a cart and taking the bodies into Porth, and Dr. Lewis went into the parlor that Secretan had used as a sitting-room, intending to gather any possessions or effects of the dead artist that he might possibly find there. Half a dozen portfolios were piled up in one corner, there were some books on a side-table, a fishing-rod and basket behind the door; that seemed all. Lewis was about to rejoin the rest of the party in the kitchen, when he looked down at some scattered papers lying with the books on the side-table. On one of the sheets he read, to his astonishment, the words, "Dr. James Lewis, Porth." This was written in a staggering, trembling scrawl.

The table stood in a dark corner of the room, and Lewis gathered up the sheets of paper and took them to the window and began to read this:

I do not think that I can last much longer. We shared out the last drops of water a long time ago. I do not know how many days ago. We fall asleep and dream and walk about the house in our dreams, and I am often not sure whether I am awake or still dreaming, and so the days and nights are confused in my mind. I awoke not long ago, at least I suppose I awoke, and found I was lying in the passage.

There seems no hope for any of us. We are in the dream of death.

Here the manuscript became unintelligible for half a dozen lines. There was a fresh start, as it were, and the writer began again, in ordinary letter-form:

DEAR LEWIS:

I hope you will excuse all this confusion and wandering. I intended to begin a proper letter to you, and now I find all that stuff that you have been reading, if this ever gets into your hands. I have not the energy even to tear it up. If you read it you will know to what a sad pass I had come when it was written.

I have said of what I am writing, "if this ever gets into your hands," and I am not at all sure that it ever will. If what is happening here is happening everywhere else, then, I suppose, the world is coming to an end. I cannot understand it; even now I can hardly believe it.

And then there 's another thing that bothers me. Now and then I wonder whether we are not all mad together in this house. Despite what I see and know, or, perhaps, I should say, because what I see and know is so impossible, I wonder whether we are not all suffering from a delusion. Perhaps we are our own jailers, and we are really free to go out and live. Perhaps what we think we see is not there at all. I wonder now and then whether we are all like this in Treff Loyne; yet in my heart I feel sure that it is not so.

Still, I do not want to leave a madman's letter behind me, and so I will not tell you the full story of what I have seen or believe I have seen. If I am a sane man, you will be able to fill in the blanks for yourself from

your own knowledge. If I am mad, burn the letter and say nothing about it.

I think that it was on a Tuesday that we first noticed that there was something queer about. I came home about five or six o'clock and found the family at Treff Loyne laughing at old Tiger, the sheep-dog. He was making short runs from the farm-yard to the door of the house, barking, with quick, short yelps. Mrs. Griffith and Miss Griffith were standing by the porch, and the dog would go to them, look into their faces, and



then run up the farm-yard to the gate, and then look back with that eager, yelping bark, as if he were waiting for the women to follow him. Then, again and again he ran up to them and tugged at their skirts, as if he would pull them by main force away from the house.

The dog barked and yelped and whined and scratched at the door all through the evening. They let him in once, but he seemed to have become quite frantic. He ran up to one member of the family after another; his eyes were bloodshot, and his mouth was foaming, and he tore at their clothes till they drove him out again into the darkness. Then he broke into a long, lamentable howl of anguish, and we heard no more of him.

It was soon after dawn when I finally roused myself. The people in the house were talking to each other in high voices, arguing about something that I did not understand.

"It is those damned Gipsies, I tell you," said old Griffith.

"What would they do a thing like that for?" asked Mrs. Griffith. "If it was stealing, now—"

They seemed puzzled and angry, so far as I could make out, but not at all frightened. I got up and began to dress. I don't think I looked out of the window. The glass on my dressing-table is high and broad, and the window is small; one would have to poke one's head round the glass to see anything.

The voices were still arguing down-stairs. I heard the old man say, "Well, here 's for a beginning, anyhow," and then the door slammed.

A minute later the old man shouted, I think, to his son. Then there was a great noise which I will not describe more particularly, and a dreadful screaming and crying inside the house and a sound of rushing feet. They all cried out at once to each other. I heard the daughter crying: "It is no good, Mother; he is dead. Indeed they have killed him," and Mrs. Griffith screaming to the girl to let her go. And then one of them rushed out of the kitchen and shot the great bolts of oak across the door just as something beat against it with a thundering crash.

I ran down-stairs. I found them all in wild confusion, in an agony of grief and horror and amazement. They were like people who had seen something so awful that they had gone mad.

I went to the window looking out on the farm-yard. I won't tell you all that I saw, but I saw poor old Griffith lying by the pond, with the blood pouring out of his side.

I wanted to go out to him and bring him in. But they told me that he must be stone-dead, and such things also that it was quite plain that any one who went out of the house would not live more than a moment. We could not believe it even as we gazed at the body of the dead man; but it was there. I used to wonder sometimes what one would feel like if one saw an apple drop from the tree and shoot up into the air and disappear. I think I know now how one would feel.

Even then we could n't believe that it would last. We were not seriously afraid for ourselves. We spoke of getting out in

an hour or two, before dinner, anyhow. It could n't last, because it was impossible. Indeed, at twelve o'clock young Griffith said he would go down to the well by the back way and draw another pail of water. I went to the door and stood by it. He had not gone a dozen yards before they were on him. He ran for his life, and we had all we could do to bar the door in time. And then I began to get frightened.

But day followed day, and it was still there. I went to Treff Loyhe because it was buried in the narrow valley under the ash-trees, far away from any track. There was not so much as a footpath that was near it; no one ever came that way.

And now this thought came back without delight, with terror. Griffith thought that a shout might be heard on a still night up away on the Allt, "if a man was listening for it," he added doubtfully. My voice was clearer and stronger than his, and on the second night I said I would go up to my bedroom and call for help through the open window. I waited till it was all dark and still, and looked out through the window before opening it. And then I saw over the ridge of the long barn across the yard what looked like a tree, though I knew there was no tree there. It was a dark mass against the sky, with wide-spread boughs, a tree of thick, dense growth. I wondered what this could be, and I threw open the window not only because I was going to call for help, but because I wanted to see more clearly what the dark growth over the barn really was.

I saw in the depth of it points of fire, and colors in light, all glowing and moving, and the air trembled. I stared out into the night, and the dark tree lifted over the roof of the barn, rose up in the air, and floated toward me. I did not move till it was close to the house; and then I saw what it was, and banged the window down only just in time. I had to fight, and I saw the tree that was like a burning cloud rise up in the night and settle over the barn.

Another day went by, and at dusk I looked out, but the eyes of fire were watching me. I dared not open the window. And then I thought of another plan. There was the great old fireplace, with the round Flemish chimney going high above the house. If I stood beneath it and shouted, I thought perhaps the sound might be carried better than if I called out of the window; for all I knew the round chimney might act as a sort of megaphone. Night after night, then, I stood on the hearth and called for help from nine o'clock to eleven.

But we had drunk up the beer, and we would let ourselves have water only by little drops, and on the fourth night my throat was dry, and I began to feel strange and weak; I knew that all the voice I had in my lungs would hardly reach the length of the field by the farm.

It was then we began to dream of wells and fountains, and water coming very cold, in little drops, out of rocky places in the middle of a cool wood. We had given up all meals; now and then one would cut a lump from the sides of bacon on the kitchen wall and chew a bit of it, but the saltness was like fire.

And then we began to dream, as I say. And one day I dreamed that there was a bubbling well of cold, clear water in the cellar, and I had just hollowed my hand to drink it when I woke. I went into the kitchen and told young Griffith. I said I was sure there was water there. He shook his head, but he took up the great kitchen poker and we went down to the old cellar. I showed him the stone by the pillar, and he raised it up. But there was no well. Later I came upon young Griffith one evening evidently trying to make a subterranean passage under one of the walls of the house. I knew he was mad, as he knew I was mad when he saw me digging for a well in the cellar; but neither said anything to the other.

Now we are past all this. We are too weak. We dream when we are awake and when we dream we think we wake. Night and day come and go, and we mistake one for another.

Only a little while ago I heard a voice which sounded as if it were at my very ears, but rang and echoed and resounded as if it were rolling and reverberated from the vault of some cathedral, chanting in terrible modulations. I heard the words quite

clearly, "Incipit liber iræ Domini Dei nostri" ("Here beginneth The Book of the Wrath of the Lord our God").

And then the voice sang the word *Aleph,* prolonging it, it seemed through ages, and a light was extinguished as it began the chapter:

"In that day, saith the Lord, there shall be a cloud over the land, and in the cloud a burning and a shape of fire, and out of the cloud shall issue forth my messengers; they shall run all together, they shall not turn aside; this shall be a day of exceeding bitterness, without salvation. And on every high hill, saith the Lord of Hosts, I will set my sentinels, and my armies shall encamp in the place of every valley; in the house that is amongst rushes I will execute judgment, and in vain shall they fly for refuge to the munitions of the rocks. In the groves of the woods, in the places where the leaves are as a tent above them, they shall find the sword of the slayer; and they that put their trust in walled cities shall be confounded. Woe unto the armed man, woe unto him that taketh pleasure in the strength of his artillery, for a little thing shall smite him, and by one that hath no might shall he be brought down into the dust. That which is low shall be set on high; I will make the lamb and the young sheep to be as the lion from the swellings of Jordan; they shall not spare, saith the Lord, and the doves shall be as eagles on the hill Engedi; none shall be found that may abide the onset of their battle."

Here the manuscript lapsed again and finally into utter, lamentable confusion of thought.

Dr. Lewis maintained that we should never begin to understand the real significance of life until we began to study just those aspects of it which we now dismiss and overlook as utterly inexplicable and therefore unimportant.

We were discussing a few months ago the awful shadow of the terror which at length had passed away from the land. I had formed my opinion, partly from observation, partly from certain facts which had been communicated to me, and the passwords having been exchanged, I found that Lewis had come by very different ways to the same end.

"And yet," he said, "it is not a true end, or, rather, it is like all the ends of human inquiry—it leads one to a great mystery. We must confess that what has happened might have happened at any time in the history of the world. It did not happen till a year ago, as a matter of fact, and therefore we made up our minds that it never could happen; or, one would better say, it was outside the range even of imagination. But this is our way. Most people are quite sure that the Black Death —otherwise the Plague—will never invade Europe again. They have made up their complacent minds that it was due to dirt and bad drainage. As a matter of fact the Plague had nothing to do with dirt or with drains, and there is nothing to prevent its ravaging England to-morrow. But if you tell people so, they won't believe you."

I agreed with all this. I added that sometimes the world was incapable of seeing, much less believing, that which was before its own eyes.

"Look," I said, "at any eighteenth-century print of a Gothic cathedral. You will find that the trained artistic eye even could not behold in any true sense the building that was before it. I have seen an old print of Peterborough Cathedral that looks as if the artist had drawn it from a clumsy model, constructed of bent wire and children's bricks."

"Exactly; because Gothic was outside the esthetic theory, and therefore vision, of the time. You can't believe what you don't see; rather, you can't see what you don't believe.

"You must not suppose that my experiences of that afternoon at Treff Loyne had afforded me the slightest illumination. Indeed, if it had not been that I had seen poor old Griffith's body lying pierced in his own farm-yard, I think I should have been inclined to accept one of Secretan's hints, and to believe that the whole family had fallen a victim to a collective delusion or hallucination, and had shut themselves up and died of thirst through sheer

madness. I think there have been such cases. But I had seen the body of the murdered man and the wound that had killed him.

"Did the manuscript left by Secretan give me no hint? Well, it seemed to me to make confusion worse confounded. You see, Secretan, in writing that extraordinary document, almost insisted on the fact that he was not in his proper senses; that for days he had been part asleep, part awake, part delirious. How was one to judge his statement, to separate delirium from fact? In one thing he stood confirmed; you remember he speaks of calling for help up the old chimney of Treff Loyne; that did seem to fit in with the tales of a hollow, moaning cry that had been heard upon the Allt. So far one could take him as a recorder of actual experiences. And I looked in the old cellars of the farm and found a frantic sort of rabbit-hole dug by one of the pillars; again he was confirmed. But what was one to make of that story of the chanting voice and the letters of the Hebrew alphabet and the chapter out of some unknown minor prophet? When one has the key it is easy enough to sort out the facts or the hints of facts from the delusions; but I had n't the key on that September evening. I was forgetting the 'tree' with lights and fires in it; that, I think, impressed me more than anything with the feeling that Secretan's story was in the main a true story. I had seen a like appearance down there in my own garden; but what was it?

"Now, I was saying that, paradoxically, it is only by the inexplicable things that life can be explained. We are apt to say, you know, 'a very odd coincidence,' and pass the matter by, as if there were no more to be said or as if that were the end of it. Well, I believe that the only real path lies through the blind alleys."

"How do you mean?"

"Well, this is an instance of what I mean. I was talking with Merritt, my brother-in-law, about the strange things he had seen in a way that I thought all nonsense, and I was wondering how I was going to shut him up when a big moth flew into the room through that window, fluttered about, and succeeded in burning itself alive in the lamp. That gave me my cue. I asked Merritt if he knew why moths made for lamps or something of the kind; I thought it would be a hint to him that I was sick of his half-baked theories. So it was; he looked sulky and held his tongue.

"But a few minutes later I was called out by a man who had found his little boy dead in a field near his cottage about an hour before. The child was so still, they said, that a great moth had settled on his forehead and fluttered away only when they lifted up the body. It was absolutely illogical; but it was this odd 'coincidence' of the moth in my lamp and the moth on the dead boy's forehead that first set me on the track. I can't say that it guided me in any real sense; it was more like a great flare of red paint on a wall.

"But, as you will remember, from having read my notes on the matter, I was called in about ten days later to see a man named Cradock who had been found in a field near his farm quite dead. This also was at night. His wife found him, and there were some very queer things in her story. She said that the hedge of the field looked as if it were changed; she began to be afraid that she had lost her way and got into the wrong field.

"Then came that extraordinary business of Treff Loyne. I took it all home, and



sat down for the evening before it. It appalled me not only by its horror, but here again by the discrepancy between its terms.

"It was, I believe, a sudden leap of the mind that liberated me from the tangle. It was quite beyond logic. I went back to that evening when Merritt was boring me, to the moth in the candle, and to the moth on the forehead of poor Johnnie Roberts. There was no sense in it; but I suddenly determined that the child and Joseph Cradock the farmer, and that unnamed Stratfordshire man, all found at night, all asphyxiated, had been choked by vast swarms of moths. I don't pretend even now that this is demonstrated, but I 'm sure it 's true.

"Now suppose you encounter a swarm of these creatures in the dark. Suppose the smaller ones fly up your nostrils. You will gasp for breath and open your mouth. Then, suppose some hundreds of them fly into your mouth, into your gullet, into your windpipe, what will happen to you? You will be dead in a very short time, choked, asphyxiated."

"But the moths would be dead, too. They would be found in the bodies."

"The moths? Do you know that it is extremely difficult to kill a moth with cyanide of potassium? Take a frog, kill it, open its stomach. There you will find its dinner of moths and small beetles, and the 'dinner' will shake itself and walk off cheerily, to resume an entirely active existence. No; that is no difficulty.

"Well, now I came to this. I was shutting out all the other cases. I was confining myself to those that came under the one formula.

"Then the next step. Of course we know nothing really about moths; rather, we know nothing of moth reality. For all I know there may be hundreds of books which treat of moths and nothing but moths. But these are scientific books, and science deals only with surfaces. It has nothing to do with realities. To take a very minor matter: we don't even know why the moth desires the flame. But we do know what the moth does not do; it does not gather itself into swarms with the object of destroying human life. But here, by the hypothesis, were cases in which the moth had done this very thing; the moth race had entered, it seemed, into a malignant conspiracy against the human race. It was quite impossible, no doubt,—that is to say, it had never happened before,—but I could see no escape from this conclusion.

"These insects, then, were definitely hostile to man; and then I stopped, for I could not see the next step, obvious though it seems to me now. If the moths were infected with hatred of men, and possessed the design and the power of combining against him, why not suppose this hatred, this design, this power shared by other non-human creatures?

"The secret of the Terror might be condensed into a sentence: the animals had revolted against men.

"Now, the puzzle became easy enough; one had only to classify. Take the cases of the people who met their deaths by falling over cliffs or over the edge of quarries. We think of sheep as timid creatures, who always run away. But suppose sheep that don't run away; and, after all, in reason why should they run away? Quarry or no quarry, cliff or no cliff, what would happen to you if a hundred sheep ran after you instead of running from you? There would be no help for it; they would have you down and beat you to death or stifle you. Then suppose man, woman, or child near a cliff's edge or a quarry-side, and a sudden rush of sheep. Clearly there is no help; there is nothing for it but to go over. There can be no doubt that that is what happened in all these cases.

"And again. You know the country and you know how a herd of cattle will sometimes pursue people through the fields in a solemn, stolid sort of way. They behave as if they wanted to close in on you. Townspeople sometimes get frightened and scream and run; you or I would take no notice, or, at the utmost, would wave our sticks at the herd, which would stop dead or lumber off. But suppose

they don't lumber off? It was a quicker death for poor Griffith of Treff Loyne: one of his own beasts gored him to death with one sharp thrust of its horn into his heart. And from that morning those within the house were closely besieged by their own cattle and horses and sheep, and when those unhappy people within opened a window to call for help or to catch a few drops of rain-water to relieve their burning thirst, the cloud waited for them with its myriad eyes of fire. Can you wonder that Secretan's statement reads in places like mania? You perceive the horrible position of those people in Treff Loyne; not only did they see death advancing on them, but advancing with incredible steps, as if one were to die not only in nightmare, but by nightmare. But no one in his wildest, most fiery dreams had ever imagined such a fate. I am not astonished that Secretan at one moment suspected the evidence of his own senses, at another surmised that the world's end had come."

"And how about the Williamses who were murdered on the Highway near here?"

"The horses were the murderers, the horses that afterward stampeded the camp below. By some means which is still obscure to me they lured that family into the road and beat their brains out; their shod hoofs were the instruments of execution. The munition-works? Their enemy was rats. I believe that it has been calculated that in 'greater London' the number of rats is about equal to the number of human beings; that is, there are about seven millions of them. The proportion would be about the same in all the great centers of population; and the rat, moreover, is on occasion migratory in its habits. You can understand now that story of the *Semiramis* beating about the mouth of the Thames, and at last cast away by Arcachon, her only crew dry heaps of bones. The rat is an expert boarder of ships. And so one can understand the tale told by the frightened man who took the path by the wood that led up from the new munition-works. He thought he heard a thousand men treading softly through the wood and chattering to one another in some horrible tongue; what he did hear was the marshaling of an army of rats, their array before the battle.

"And conceive the terror of such an attack. Even one rat in a fury is said to be an ugly customer to meet; conceive, then, the irruption of these terrible, swarming myriads, rushing upon the helpless, unprepared, astonished workers in the munition-shops."

THERE can be no doubt, I think, that Dr. Lewis was entirely justified in these extraordinary conclusions. As I say, I had arrived at pretty much the same end, by different ways; but this rather as to the general situation, while Lewis had made his own particular study of those circum-



stances of the Terror that were within his immediate purview, as a physician in large practice in the southern part of Meirion. Of some of the cases which he reviewed he had, no doubt, no immediate or first-hand knowledge; but he judged these instances by their similarity to the facts which had come under his personal notice. He spoke of the affairs of the quarry at Llanfihangel on the analogy of the people who were found dead at the bottom of the cliffs near Porth, and he was no doubt justified in doing so. He told me that, thinking the whole matter over, he was hardly more astonished by the Terror in itself than by the strange way in which he had arrived at his conclusions.

"You know," he said, "those certain

evidences of animal malevolence which we knew of, the bees that stung the child to death, the trusted sheep-dog's turning savage, and so forth. Well, I got no light whatever from all this; it suggested nothing to me. You do not believe; therefore you cannot see.

"And then, when the truth at last appeared, it was through the whimsical 'coincidence,' as we call such signs, of the moth in my lamp and the moth on the dead child's forehead. This, I think, is very extraordinary."

"And there seems to have been one beast that remained faithful—the dog at Treff Loyne. That is strange."

"That remains a mystery."

It would not be wise, even now, to describe too closely the terrible scenes that were to be seen in the munition areas of the North and the Midlands during the black months of the Terror. Out of the factories issued at black midnight the shrouded dead in their coffins, and their very kinsfolk did not know how they had come by their deaths. All the towns were full of houses of mourning, were full of dark and terrible rumors as incredible as the incredible reality. There were things done and suffered that perhaps never will be brought to light, memories and secret traditions of these things will be whispered in families, delivered from father to son, growing wilder with the passage of the years, but never growing wilder than the truth.

It is enough to say that the cause of the Allies was for a while in deadly peril. The men at the front called in their extremity for guns and shells. No one told them what was happening in the places where these munitions were made.

But, after the first panic, measures were taken. The workers were armed with special weapons, guards were mounted, machine-guns were placed in position, bombs and liquid flame were ready against the obscene hordes of the enemy, and the "burning clouds" found a fire fiercer than their own. Many deaths occurred among the airmen; but they, too, were given special guns, arms that scattered shot broadcast, and so drove away the dark flights that threatened the airplanes.

And then, in the winter of 1915–16, the Terror ended suddenly as it had begun. Once more a sheep was a frightened beast that ran instinctively from a little child; the cattle were again solemn, stupid creatures, void of harm; the spirit and the convention of malignant design passed out of the hearts of all the animals. The chains that they had cast off for a while were thrown again about them.

And finally there comes the inevitable "Why?" Why did the beasts who had been humbly and patiently subject to man, or affrighted by his presence, suddenly know their strength and learn how to league together and declare bitter war against their ancient master?

It is a most difficult and obscure question. I give what explanation I have to give with very great diffidence, and an eminent disposition to be corrected if a clearer light can be found.

Some friends of mine, for whose judgment I have very great respect, are inclined to think that there was a certain contagion of hate. They hold that the fury of the whole world at war, the great passion of death that seems driving all humanity to destruction, infected at last these lower creatures, and in place of their native instinct of submission gave them rage and wrath and ravening.

This may be the explanation. I cannot say that it is not so, because I do not profess to understand the working of the universe. But I confess that the theory strikes me as fanciful. There may be a contagion of hate as there is a contagion of smallpox; I do not know, but I hardly believe it.

In my opinion, and it is only an opinion, the source of the great revolt of the beasts is to be sought in a much subtler region of inquiry. I believe that the subjects revolted because the king abdicated. Man has dominated the beasts throughout the ages, the spiritual has reigned over the rational through the peculiar quality and grace of spirituality that men possess, that makes a man to be that which he is. And

when he maintained this power and grace, I think it is pretty clear that between him and the animals there was a certain treaty and alliance. There was supremacy on the one hand and submission on the other; but at the same time there was between the two that cordiality which exists between lords and subjects in a well-organized state. I know a socialist who maintains that Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales" give a picture of true democracy. I do not know about that, but I see that knight and miller were able to get on quite pleasantly together, just because the knight knew that he was a knight and the miller knew that he was a miller. If the knight had had conscientious objections to his knightly grade, while the miller saw no reason why he should not be a knight, I am sure that their intercourse would have been difficult, unpleasant, and perhaps murderous.

So with man. I believe in the strength and truth of tradition. A learned man said to me a few weeks ago: "When I have to choose between the evidence of tradition and the evidence of a document, I always believe the evidence of tradition. Documents may be falsified and often are falsified; tradition is never falsified." This is true; and therefore, I think, one may put trust in the vast body of folklore which asserts that there was once a worthy and friendly alliance between man and the beasts. Our popular tale of Dick Whittington and his cat no doubt represents the adaptation of a very ancient legend to a comparatively modern personage, but we may go back into the ages and find the popular tradition asserting that not only are the animals the subjects, but also the friends of man.

All that was in virtue of that singular spiritual element in man which the rational animals do not possess. Spiritual does not mean respectable, it does not even mean moral, it does not mean "good" in the ordinary acceptation of the word. It signifies the royal prerogative of man, differentiating him from the beasts.

For long ages he has been putting off this royal robe, he has been wiping the balm of consecration from his own breast. He has declared again and again that he is not spiritual, but rational; that is, the equal of the beasts over whom he was once sovereign. He has vowed that he is not Orpheus, but Caliban.

But the beasts also have within them something which corresponds to the spiritual quality in men; we are content to call it instinct. They perceived that the throne was vacant; not even friendship was possible between them and the self-deposed monarch. If he was not king, he was a sham, an impostor, a thing to be destroyed.

Hence, I think, the Terror. They have risen once; they may rise again.



The Flying Teuton

BY ALICE BROWN

WE were talking, that night, about the year after the great war, which was also the year of the great religious awakening. A few of us had dropped into the Neo-Pacifist Club, that assemblage of old-time pacifists who, having been actually immersed in the great war, afterward set humbly about informing themselves on the subject of those passions that make the duty of defensive fighting at times a holy one, and who, having once seen Michael hurl Satan down to the abyss, actually began to suspect you'd got to do more than read Satan the beatitudes if he climbed up again. There never was anything like the eagerness of these after-the-war pacifists to study human nature in other than its sentimental aspects, to learn to predict the great waves of savagery that wreck civilization at intervals—unless there are dykes—and to plumb the heroism of those men who gave their bodies that the soul of nations might securely live. We retraced a good many steps on wide territory that night, took up and looked at things familiar we were all the better for remembering, as a man says his creed, from time to time, no matter how well he knows it; and chiefly we read over, in its different aspects, the pages of the great revival. This was not, it will be remembered, an increase in the authority of any church, but simply the recognition in all hearts of all peoples that God is, and that the plagues of the world spawn out of our forgetfulness that He is, and our overwhelming desire toward the things of this temporal life. Whence, in our haste, we sacrifice to the devil.

The terms of peace had been as righteous as it is possible for hurt hearts to compass. Evil had been bound and foresight had made the path of justice plain. The nations that had borne the first attack (and with what light limbs they sprang to meet it!), they who had learned to read God in that awful unfurling of the book of life, were wonderfully ready to enter on their task of building up the house of peace. The United States, which had saved its skin so long that it had almost mislaid its soul, was sitting at the knees of knowledge and plainly asking to be taught. One amazing detail of the great revival was that there would be no industrial boycott. The men about the peace table came away from it imbued with a desire to save the peoples who had been guilty of the virtue of obedience in following false rulers, and they represented to their governments the barbarity of curbing even the commerce of those nations which had set the world ablaze. So it followed that territory and indemnities were the penalties imposed. Boundaries had changed—and so had governments!—but every country was to go back to its former freedom of selling goods in all quarters of the earth. In their arguments the peace delegates had used the supreme one that, "Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord." They had fixed the terms of all the vengeance they were sure they were entitled to, fixed it soberly and sternly, too. But they did not quite see, having effectually crippled the powers of evil, that they ought also to cripple the powers of good—the desire of nations to sell their products and the work of their hands abroad. So they said, "Vengeance is mine," but they did not go so far as to note that, judging from the centuries, God Himself would indubitably be on the spot. He would repay.

It was in the spring of that year that a German liner, tied up since 1914, and waiting the will of the English fleet, was released and put into commission again and loaded with goods for the United States. On board her was Frank Drake, a newspaper correspondent who had,

after hovering about the Peace Congress, been wandering over Germany, in a desultory fashion, to see what changes had been wrought in her by the war. And it was Drake who sat with us at the Neo-Pacifist Club that night, and was persuaded to tell a story he had, in the year after the great war, got into print, and so done incalculable service to the muse of history and incidentally made his own name to be remembered. For what he had seen hundreds of others confirmed —only he saw it first, and gave his testimony in a manner so direct as well as picturesque that it might as well have been he alone who sang that epic story.

He was a tough, seasoned-looking man, spare, and hard as whipcord, and with an adventurer's face—aquiline, uplifted, looking for horizons, some one said. At this point of his life he was gray-headed—yet he never would be old. We had gathered about him as near as might be, and really filled the room 'way back into the shadows. He had been talking about the supernatural events that had been inextricably mingled with facts of battle and march and countermarch, and owned himself frankly bemused by them.

"It isn't as if I hadn't actually been in the war, you know. I've seen things. So I haven't the slightest doubt the French saw Angels at Mons. I haven't the slightest doubt a fellow blown out of a trench into the next world meets so many of the other fellows that were blown there before him that it gives him that look—I've seen it over and over—of surprise, wonder. Oh, and beauty, too, a most awful kind of beauty. Whatever they saw when they went from the trenches to—wherever it is—they were mighty well pleased to be there, and satisfied that the other fellows could get along without them. And, mind you, things lasted, too, after they got over there. I'm as sure of that as I am that I'm sitting here. The love of it all—the *Vive la France!* you know, the grotesque fondness for Old Blighty that made them die for her—those weren't wiped out by getting into another atmosphere. It's all pretty much the same, you know, there and here, only there you apparently see the causes of things and the values. And you absolutely can't hate. You see what a damned shame it was that anybody should ever have been ignorant enough to hate."

"You'd say it was a world of peace?" inquired a rapt-looking saint of a man in the front row.

"Don't talk to me about peace—yet," said Drake. "I'm not over there and I haven't got that perspective. As for Peace, too many crimes were committed in her name those last years of the war—too much cowardice, expediency, the devil and all of people wanting to save their skins and their money. Yes, I know, peace is what they've earned for us, those fellows in Europe, and it's a gorgeous peace. But the word itself does take me back. It sets me swearing.

"Yes, I'll tell you about the ship, the *Treue Königin* and the first sailing from Bremen, if that's what you want. They'd put a good deal of spectacular business into the sailing of that ship because she was the first one after John Bull tied up their navy. There were flags flying and crowds and *Hochs!* and altogether it was an occasion to be remembered. I knew it would be, and that's why I was there. I rather wanted to say I was on the first free ship that sailed out of Bremen, and I hadn't much Teutonophobia any more since Kultur had got its medicine. Besides, wasn't the whole world chanting 'Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord'? and I'd begun to be awakened a little, too, in my inward parts, though I didn't talk much about it. The voyage began delightfully. I was the only American on board. The rest were merchants going over to take up relations with us again, and a brand-new consul or two.

"Near evening on the second day something queer happened. It was foggy, and I was on deck, talking, in a desultory way, with the first mate, but really wondering if I'd got to sleep to the obligato of the fog-horn all night, when suddenly out of the dark came the nose of a great ship. Our engines were reversed, but not in time, and she struck us amidships. I cowered down. Yes, I did. There was no time for life-preservers and lowering boats. I simply cowered, and put my hand over my eyes.

But there was no crash, no shock, no grinding of splintered wood and steel. I opened my eyes. The first mate was still there, a foot or two further from me, as if the apparition had started him toward his duty in case of collision. But he was looking off into the fog, and now he turned and looked at me. I have seen men frightened, but never one in such case as this.

"'Did you see it?' he asked. It was as if he implored me to say I did, because otherwise he'd have to doubt his own reason.

"'Did she sheer off?' I asked. My voice sounded queer to me.

"'Sheer off? She struck us amidships and went through us.'

"I began to stare 'round me. I must have looked a fool. It was as if I were trying to find a break in a piece of china. There was the deck unoccupied, except for us two, exactly as it had been when we were struck. There were the smoke-stacks and boats and altogether the familiar outline of the ship.

"'Well!' said I. My voice was a sort of croak now. 'You and I are nutty, that's all. There never was any ship.'

"But he turned and ran up to the lookout, and afterward I heard the wireless zip-zipping away, and later—for I stayed on deck; I couldn't go below—I saw him and the captain standing amidships and talking. They looked pretty serious and really a little sick, just as I felt. And I didn't speak to either of them. Didn't dare. You know when there's a fire in the hold, or any such pleasantry on board ship, you'd better let the great high josses alone. Well, that's what I did. The next day I found the first mate wouldn't notice me. He spoke English perfectly, but all I could get out of him was a *Nein* or a *Was?* and as stupid a grin as I ever saw on a man's face. So I understood the incident was closed. And it began to look a little thin even to me, who'd seen it. But the next night, with no fog at all, the thing happened again. A big British liner came down on us, and we did all in the power of navigation to escape her; but she raked us and passed through us from stem to stern, and I swear I put out a hand and touched her as she cut the length of the deck. For an instant I believed what I know every officer and man on the ship believed at the time—believed madly, for you couldn't reason in the face of that monstrous happening. They believed England had broken the peace, only they cursed 'perfidious Albion,' and I knew she'd got wind of some devil's deed we hadn't heard of, and was at her old beneficence of police work on the sea. But it was only an instant we could think that, for there, untouched, unharmed, at her maximum speed went the English liner. And we, too, were untouched. We weren't making our course because we'd manœuvered so as to avoid her, and now we lay there an instant, trembling, before we swung about again. Yes, it's a fact; the ship did tremble, and though there was her plain mechanical reason for it, it seemed to be out of panic, just as everybody aboard of her was trembling. And that night the ship's doctor, a fat, red-haired man whom I'd remembered as waltzing indefatigably and exquisitely on a trip to the West Indies, but who had been turned into a jelly of melancholy by the war, did talk to me. I think he had to. He thought he was dotty and the entire lot were dotty. He had to find out whether a plain American was onto it.

"'A pleasant night, last night,' he said.

"I knew what he was coming at, and I thought there was no need of wasting our time by preambles. 'Yes,' said I, 'till the British liner ran us down.'

"He looked at me—well, I can't tell you how grateful he looked. All melted up, you know, the way those fatties are sometimes. I stepped away a little. I thought he was going to kiss me.

"'You saw it, too. God be thanked!' said he.

"'Saw it!' said I. 'I not only saw her, but I touched her on the elbow as she split the deck. Splendid old lady, wasn't she? But eccentric. Makes nothing of cutting a ship in two, just for fun, I suppose, and not losing speed. Her little joke. That's how I take it, don't you?'

"But I shouldn't have chaffed him. It shut him up. I think he gathered I was in it somehow. But the fact is, I was scared. Well, if you'll believe me (and of course you will, for I've written the thing out in my Notes on the War,

and it's been quoted over and over till even school children know the text of it), so, as you must believe me and the hundreds that corroborated me, in other cases, the next collision, or ramming—what shall I call it?—happened in broad daylight, ten o'clock in the morning. It was a perfectly clear day and a smooth sea. We were in the track of the freighter *Marlborough*, and by George! she didn't make way for us. She ran through us as neat as wax and cut us in two. But we didn't stay cut. We didn't show a crack. And there she went churning off, as gay as you please, and we steamed on our way. Only we weren't gay, mind you. We were scared. And the doctor, ghastly again, came stumping across the deck to me, and I thought he was going to fall into my arms.

"'*Lieber Gott!*' said he. 'What does it mean? We see them, but they don't see us.'

"That was it. We'd been slow in taking the hint, but we'd got it at last. We were invisible on the seas. We were practically non-existent. And we'd tried wireless. We'd sent out call after call, and finally, desperately, S. O. S., because we knew, if there was a conspiracy against us, no ship but would listen to that. No answer. We were marooned—if you can be marooned on the high seas. Civilization had put us on an island of silence and invisibility. Civilization wasn't going to play with us any more. Though it wasn't civilization at all. It wasn't any punitive device of man. It was something outside.

"For the next two days the doctor hardly left me. I suppose he was forbidden to talk and he had to keep near somebody or die. He wasn't the man he was when he tripped the light fantastic in the West Indies. He'd been through the war, and now he was going through something worse. And he said to me the morning of the day before we were due in New York:

"'Now we shall be picking up the pilot. And I sha'n't go back. I've got a married daughter in New York. I shall spend the rest of my life with her.'

"And, as we went on, we sighted ship after ship. It was a great day for ships. You don't know how many there are till they won't notice you. And not one of them would turn out for us or answer our call. And everybody was desperate now on board, though we had learned we were safe enough, even if they did run us down. So we put on all speed and forged ahead and rammed whatever got in our way—and never sunk them. Never seemed to touch them. But with every one we hit and never hurt our panic grew. Desperate panic it was, from the captain down to me. Then we came on the pilot-boats, quite a distance out, for of course everybody knew we were coming and there was a little rivalry about it all. Just as I'd wanted to say I'd crossed on the first liner from Germany, every pilot wanted to be the one to take us in. Well, the first one was making for us and we hailed him. But, by God! he didn't slacken speed, but dashed through us. That little bobbing boat ran through our High Mightiness and went careering on in search of us. And we went on in search of another pilot. And we sighted him shortly, several of him; and, though they didn't ram us in that ghostly way they had, they went sliding by us, bowing and ducking to the breeze, and always—that was the awful part of it—looking for us. There we were, and they didn't see us. And we hailed them and they didn't hear. By that time we were all pretty nearly off our nuts, and it took us different ways. The captain was purple with rage and that sense of injured importance the Deutscher didn't lose by having to toe the mark after his big war bubble burst. He swore, and I heard him, that he could take his own ship into New York Harbor as well as any condemned pilot that ever sailed, and he wouldn't even hail another, not even if all the dead in the sea rose up and faced him. I was rather worried over that about the dead in the sea. I couldn't help thinking that if all the dead recently in the sea rose up and combined against any German ship, it would have short shrift. But we were all, I fancy, rather glad of his stand. We had full confidence in him. He was a clever, daring fellow, heavier by the iron cross—for in the last years he'd sent scores of men unwarned to the bottom, and he had been precious to Kultur. We much preferred to go in unpiloted to making even

one more grisly try at proving we were living flesh and blood.

"My own particular obsession was to wonder what would happen if, when a ship clove our decks and left them solid, as they'd done so often in the past six days, I put myself in the way of its nose. Would it run through me like a wedge and I close up unhurt? Would it smash me, carry me with it off the deck, to Kingdom Come? I wondered. It didn't smash life-boats or deck-chairs. It—I found I was beginning to call the ramming boats 'it,' as if there were but one of them, though really there were all kinds of craft—it would go through a rug on the deck and leave it in its folds. But I hadn't the sand to put myself in its way and find out beyond a peradventure whether it tore me, nerve from nerve. The drama was too absorbing. I wanted to see it through. I did once, in my most daring minute, stand at the rail, watching a freighter as it came, head on. And I yelled to the lookout, when we were near enough to pass the time of day, yelled desperately. I can see him now, a small man with a lined face and blue eyes screwed up into a point of light, as if the whole of him concentrated on feeding that one sense, just seeing. And there was a queer-shaped scar on his face, a kind of cornerwise scar, and I wondered how he got it. The freighter was making her maximum, and so were we; but in that fraction of time I waited for her it seemed to be hours, eternities, that I had my eyes on the little man with the scar. It seemed as if he and I alone had the destinies of the world to settle. If I called and he answered me, it would prove our ship was not lost in a loneness of invisibility more terrible than any obvious danger on the unfriending seas. Suppose you were in hell, and you met face to face somebody that had your pardon or your reprieve mysteriously about him, and the pardon and reprieve of all the other millions there—think how you'd fix him with your eyes and signal, call to him for fear he'd pass you by. Well, that was how I signaled and called the little man with the scar. But he stared through me out of those clear lenses of his eyes, and when I yelled the loudest he made up his lips and began whistling a tune. It was a whispering sort of whistle, but I heard it, we were so near. And the tune—well, the tune broke my heart, for it was an old English tune that made me think of the beautiful English country as I had seen it not many weeks before, with the people soberly beginning to till it with unhindered hands. And here were we on a German ship that the world wouldn't even see. The sun himself wouldn't lend his rays for humanity to look at us. And then, as I began to cry—yes, I cried; I'm not ashamed to own it—the freighter passed through us, and I felt the unsteadiness of her wake. The lookout and I had met in hell, and I had hailed and he had not answered me.

"Was I glad to see the Goddess of Liberty and the gay old harbor of New York? I believe you! We went on like a house afire, and once, when I caught a glimpse of the captain's face, I decided he could steer his ship into any harbor against unknown reefs and currents, because there was a fury of revolt in him, a colossal force of will. And as I thought that I exulted with him, for, though nobody knows better than I do the way the Furies ought to be out after Kultur—oh yes, they'd have to or lose their job—there was a kind of fighting grit that came up in me, and for that voyage I was conscious that the *Treue Königin* had got to fight, fight, for existence, the mere decency of being visible to other men. Did we sail into New York Harbor, invisible or not? You know as well as I. The story's as real as George Washington and Valley Forge, and it 'll stay in print, like them, as long as print exists. We stopped short, an instant only, it was, and then against the impetus of the ship and the steering-gear and against the will of her captain and her crew, she turned about and steamed away again. And, by the Lord! it was as graceful a sweep as I ever saw a liner make. I remember thinking afterward that if there were heavenly steersmen on board—the Furies, maybe, taking the wheel by turn—they knew little tricks of the trade we pygmies didn't. At first, of course, this right-about didn't worry us. It didn't worry me, at least. I thought the captain had found it a more difficult matter than he thought, and was going down harbor

again, for some mysterious nautical reason, to turn about and make another try. But pretty soon I saw my fat doctor making for me. He was ash-colored by now, and he kept licking his dry lips.

"'We're going back,' he said.

"'Ah!' said I. 'They don't find it so easy?'

"'Why, good God, man!' said he, 'look at the sun. Don't you see your course? We're going back, I tell you!'

"'Back where?' I asked. But I didn't care. So long as we made New York Harbor within twenty-four hours or more I wasn't going to complain.

"'Where?' said he. He looked at me now as if he'd got to teach me what he knew, and I thought I'd never seen eyes so full of fear, absolute fear. Nothing in mortal peril calls that look into a man's eyes. It has to be the unknown, the unaccounted for. 'How do I know where? I only know the ship's out of our hands somehow. She won't answer.'

"'Well,' said I, 'something's the matter with the machinery.' You see, the bright American air, the gay harbor, the Statue of Liberty—everything had heartened me. For an instant I didn't believe we really were invisible.

"'The machinery's working like a very devil, but it's working its own way. You can't turn a nut on this ship unless it wants to be turned. You can't change your course unless this devil of a ship wants it changed.'

"I laughed out. 'You've been under too much of a strain,' said I. 'You seem to think the ship's bewitched. Well, if we're not to dock in New York, after this little excursion down the harbor, where is it your impression we're going? Back to Germany?'

"'God knows!' said he, solemnly. 'Maybe back to Germany. I wish to God we were there now. Or maybe we shall sail the seas—eternally.'

"I laughed again. But he put up his hand and I stopped, his panic was actually so terrible. I was sorry for the beggar

"'Wait!' said he. 'I thought that would happen. I wonder it hasn't happened before.'

"A man came running—the quartermaster, I found out afterward—and I had one glimpse of his face as he passed. He covered the deck as if he were sprinting and was near the goal, and suddenly the run seemed only to give him momentum or get his courage up, and he slipped over the rail, with a flying confusion of arms and legs, into the sea. I yelled and grabbed a life-belt and ran to the rail, where I knew there'd be sailors, in an instant, letting down a boat. I threw my life-belt, and kept on yelling. But no one came, no one but the doctor. In an instant I realized he was by my side, his hands in his pockets, his eyes fixed in a dull gaze on the sea. And we hadn't slackened speed, and we hadn't put about, and I saw two other sailors idly at the rail, looking as the doctor looked, into the vacancy of immediate space.

"'For God's sake!' said I, 'aren't they going to do something?'

"'There's nothing to do,' said my doctor. 'He won't come up. They know that.'

"'Won't come up? Why won't he?'

"'Because he doesn't want to.'

"'Didn't you ever hear of the instinct of self-preservation,' I spluttered, 'that steps in and defeats a man, even when he thinks he's done with life? How do you know but that poor devil is back there choking and praying and swallowing salt water, and sane again—sane enough to see he was dotty when he swapped the deck for the sea?'

"'He won't come up,' said the doctor. He turned away and, with his head bent, began to plod along the deck. I couldn't help thinking of the way he used to fly over the planks in the West Indies. But he did turn back again for one word more. 'Did you,' said he—and he looked a little—what shall I say? a little ironic, as if he'd got something now to floor me with—'did you ever happen to hear of the *Flying Dutchman*?'

"Then I understood. They'd understood days and days ago. The words had been whispered round the decks, in the galley even, *Der Fliegende Holländer*. Knowing better than I what Kultur had done on the high seas, they had hit sooner on the devilish logic of it. They were more or less prepared. But it struck me right in the center. After

they'd once said it I didn't any more doubt it than if I'd been sitting in an orchestra stall, with the score of the old "Flying Dutchman" and the orchestra's smash-bang, and the fervid conductor with his bald head to divert me for a couple of hours or so. And I went down into my cabin and stretched out in my berth and shut my eyes. And all I remember thinking was that if we were going to sail the seas invisible till doomsday, I'd stay put, and not get dotty seeing the noses of ships cleaving the deck or trying to hail little whistling men with scars on their faces and finding that, so far as they knew, I wasn't in the universe at all. I think I dozed for a matter of two days. The steward brought me grub of a primitive sort—our cuisine wasn't what it had been coming over—and news, whenever I would take it from him. There had been more of the ghastly collisions. We had picked up S. O. S. from an English ship and gone to her rescue, to find we could neither hail her nor, though we launched boats, approach her within twenty feet. Why? The same reason that prevented our going into New York Harbor, if you can tell me what that was. And in the midst of these futile efforts a Brazilian freighter came along and did the salving neatly, and neither ship was any more aware of us than if we had been a ship of air. But my chief news, the only news that mattered, I got from the steward's face. It was yellow-white, and the eyes were full of that same apprehension I had learned to know now—the fear of the unknown. He brought sparse items he dropped in a whisper, as if he had been forbidden to speak and yet must speak or die—about the supply of water, the supply of coal. It was his theory that, when the coal actually gave out and the engines stopped, we should stay everlastingly tossing in the welter of the sea, watching the happy wings of commerce go sailing by and hailed of none. But it proved not to be so, and when he told me that it scared him doubly. For we economized coal to the last point, and it seemed the engines went excellently without it, so long, at least, as we kept our course for Germany. Evidently, so far as we could guess at the designs of those grim powers that had blocked our way, a German ship was to be aided, even by miracle, to sail back to Germany, but not to enter any foreign port. And we did go back to Germany, meeting meantime other German ships just out, and we hailed them and they saw us and answered. And the same fear was on the faces of every soul on board, and the news was in every case the same. They were, to all the ships of all the world, invisible.

"We slunk into harbor, and I have never known how the captain met his company or what exporters said to the consignments of merchandise returned untouched in the hold. I only know that the shore officials looked strangely at us, and, since we told the same mad story, seemed to think a whole ship's crew could hardly be incarcerated. You must remember, too, that since the war signs and wonders have had a different value. There have been too many marvels for men to scout them. There was the marvel of the victory, you know. But we won't go into that. I suppose books will be written about it until the end of time. You may be sure of one thing—I didn't let the grass grow under my feet. I made tracks for Holland, and from there I put for England, and sailed from Liverpool, and was in New York in a little over five days. And by that time the whole world knew. German ships were in full possession, as they had been before the war, of the freedom of the seas—except that they mysteriously could not use it. German ships took passengers, as of old, and loaded themselves with merchandise. But there was not a port on the surface of the globe that could receive them. Yet there was a certain beneficence in the power that condemned them to this wandering exile—they could go home. And so strange a thing is hope, and so almost unbreakable a thing is human will, that they would no sooner go home in panic than they would recover and dare the seas again, as if, peradventure, it might be different this time, or as if the wrath of the grim powers might be overpast. And it came out that the shipping rotted in their harbors, and there were many suicides among sailingmen."

When Drake reached this point in his story he almost always got solemn and rhythmic. His book was succinctly and plainly written, but he could never speak of its subject-matter without the rhythm of imagery.

"You know," he continued, "it wasn't expected, while the war was going on, that there would be a living being, not of Teutonic birth, who would ever be soft over a Teuton until near the tail end of time, when some of the penalties had been worked out. But, by George! the countries that had been injured most were the first to be sorry for the poor devils that had prated about the freedom of the seas and now had to keep their own ships tied up in harbor, tight as in war-time, because the fleet that withstood them, drew the mighty cordon, was the fleet of God. Belgium had prayers for the German fleet. England sent experts over to see what was the matter with their engines. Russia prayed for the boats, as she had for her four-footed beasties in the war, and France—well, France proposed that she and England should establish a maritime service from Germany to the United States and South American ports, with nominal freight rates, until the world found out what the deuce was the matter or what God actually meant. And it was to begin the week before Christmas, if you remember, and something put it into the clever French brain that maybe a German Christmas ship—a ship all full of toys and dolls—might be let to pass. France didn't think it was bamboozling God by swinging a censer of sentiment before Him; but it knew God might be willing to speak our little language with us, encourage us in it, let us think He knew what we were trying to tell Him when we took the toys and dolls. And, if you remember, a string of ships went out that day, all with pretty serious men on board, men of an anxious countenance. And the British and French ships convoyed them like mother birds, and other British and French ships met them, and for a time no Teuton ship dared speak a foreign one for fear it should not be answered. But finally one—it was my old ship, the *Treue Königin*, and on her my old captain—couldn't wait any longer, and did speak, and every French and English boat answered her, and she knew she and the rest were saved—for the eyes of man could see them and the ears of man were opened to their voice. And that's all. You know the rest—how the German navy slowly and soberly built up its lines and sailed the seas again, but how nobody ceased talking of the wonder of the time when it was under the ban of judgment. And nobody ever will cease, because of all the signs and marvels of these later years this was the greatest."

"I have heard," said the pacifist in the front row, "that there is one submarine that actually does sail the sea, and never has found rest."

"Yes," said Drake. He looked grim now, and nobody could doubt that he knew whereof he spoke. "She is sometimes visible. She plies back and forth along the Irish coast, and on the seventh of May she shows her periscope. She is obliged to. They say she has one passenger—the Man We Do Not Mention."

"Do you suppose—" began the pacifist, and Drake interrupted him:

"Do I suppose that sentence ever will be worked out? Maybe it isn't a sentence. Maybe it's a warning, against pride and cruelty and lust of power; maybe the Man We Do Not Mention is condemned to sail it, and sails it in fear and hate. But maybe he sails it in humility by now, and is willing to be hated, so long as he can be the warning to the world—the warning against his sins. Do you know, I've often wondered if he knows one thing—if he knows that, whenever toasts are drunk in Germany, it isn't now '*Der Tag*,' but it is, since that day when England and France joined hands to help their scared old enemy, 'The Fleet!'"

"He'd think it meant the German navy, anyway," said a younger, unregenerate man, who was no pacifist—only, being young, too quick of tongue and rash of apprehension.

"Oh no, he wouldn't," said Drake, a very warm tone in his voice. It told youth it didn't know what its elders had been through. "He'd know it meant—The Fleet!"

THE PAVILION OF SAINT MERCI

By MARY HEATON VORSE

[A Short-Story]

NOTE: *The recent policy of The FORUM has been to present at least one strong piece of fiction in each issue. The following powerful story is in line with this policy. Stories by Achmed Abdullah, Sax Rohmer, and prominent authors will follow.*

WHEN Mrs. Trevor told the old woman in the concierge's lodge that they had come to look at the Pavilion of Saint Merci, she stared at her without speaking. Her frightened glance traveled from Emily Trevor to Eileen and on to Geoffrey Morrow.

Her face already pale turned to ashen color; terror seemed to have engulfed her.

The Trevors had come for no more sinister purpose than finding a house in a secluded quarter, and the Pavilion de Saint Merci in the garden behind the old Hôtel de Saint Merci in the still and ancient quarter back of the Pantheon seemed to speak to them of shelter and of peace.

Suddenly the old woman broke the silence and her voice had the terror of a frightened seagull.

"Who told you the Pavilion was for rent?" she shrilled, "Was it Guyon the agent who told you that?" The two women shrank back while Geoffrey Morrow answered:

"Certainly, why not?"

Here the old woman burst into a shrill fit of unpleasant laughter. She checked herself in the middle of it and said soberly and earnestly:

"Guyon had no right to tell you that. If he wished to tell you anything he should have told you what I told him. What that was I can't tell you. I told it to Guyon—that was enough."

She saw the look in the eyes of the two women, and suddenly gained control of herself.

"Madame forgive the vagaries of an old woman. I am

not mad, I assure you, but the Pavilion has remained unrented for so long—that surprise seized me."

"Why has no one rented it?" asked Geoffrey. The old woman was silent a moment. It seemed as though she had entered into some fastness of her own spirit, as though she were debating some important problem. Then she replied steadily:

"The quarter is remote and there is but room for two people in the Pavilion."

"It is what my daughter and myself want—a small place," said Mrs. Trevor.

"Your daughter—" cried the old woman. "Madamoiselle is your *daughter!*"

The two women smiled; it was familiar ground for them and it had ceased to interest them that they were perpetually supposed to be sisters. Again the old woman's gaze traveled from one to the other, as though she were debating some deep problem, and suddenly she rose to her feet with an unexpected briskness.

"Allons!" she said, and it was as though she had made some momentous decision. She took her keys from an ancient secretary, smoothed her apron and preceded them into the garden.

A light mist shrouded the tops of the trees, whose trunks stood out green against the walls, which were gray where they were not laden with ancient ivy. Now and then a golden leaf floated down as gently as a dying moth.

At the far end of the garden stood the Pavilion de Saint Merci as though it had shrunk away as far as it could from the great and stern building which shut it off from the street. Among the ancient and moss-grown trees it had almost an air of frivolity, for the Hôtel de Saint Merci presented to the world a grim facade. It spoke of the fighting age, an age full of obligations to the Church and the State and the Family, while the Pavilion, though ancient and faded, seemed to embody the whim of youth. Close beside the Pavilion was a discreet and inconspicuous door which led to the side street. Plainly this door existed for the convenience

of those who occupied the Pavilion, so that they might pass in and out unnoticed by the concierge of the hôtel. The concierge noticed that Geoffrey's eyes were on it and she said hastily:

"That door has not been used for many years, not since my grandfather's time. This door in the garden was left open the morning that young Edouard de Saint Merci was found on the floor of the Pavilion stabbed to death; since then the door has been closed firmly with bolts." And so curious was her way of saying this, so contemporaneous did she make it seem, that the two women looked at one another with something like apprehension—it seemed that only yesterday Edouard de Saint Merci might have been found dead within the Pavilion.

"Yes, yes!" went on the old woman, her troubled face darkening still further, "since that day the door to the garden has been bolted, and bolted it shall stay! Trouble always went in that door and trouble came out of it."

She fumbled with the key and threw the door wide open.

"Enter to the Pavilion de Saint Merci! Mesdames and Monsieur," she said. "No woman but myself has crossed this threshold for twenty-five years," and then, as though talking to herself, she nodded her head: "Yes, yes, twenty-five years! Yes, yes!"

From the ante-chamber they walked into the salon. The pale October sun shot a ray more silver than gold through the windows. The room itself seemed bathed in sunlight with the gilt of its mirrors and the yellow of its upholstery. Its furnishings were of the time of Napoleon and not the smallest object had been added since then. Its air of gaiety dispelled completely the discomfort of the scene. The old woman had recovered her serenity and prattled in homely fashion about the convenience of the place.

In spite of its threadbare aspect it had a curious air of recent occupancy; one was surprised not to see any vestige about of those who lived there. One expected a bit of needle-work, a book turned upside down, roses fading. So definite was this that it brought from Mrs. Trevor the exclamation:

"Why, how extraordinary! The room only needs a fire lit to have a heart already."

"I keep it tended and aired," the old woman explained. And when Eileen said to her:

"It seems as if those who lived here might return at any moment," she replied:

"Perhaps they do. Who knows? I keep it in readiness." She turned and faced them. "Pardon, Mesdames, Monsieur," she said, "you must have thought my conduct more than strange, but as you asked for the Pavilion a flood of memories came over me—the memory of Monsieur Julien who brooded so many years here, and of Madame Paul and of all those in this family whom I have served—that it has unnerved me. My father and my grandfather before me served the Saint Mercis, and you and your daughter in some way reminded me of the ladies whom I knew so well. I am an old woman, Madame,—forgive me." She turned with a gesture full of kindness to Mrs. Trevor.

"I think," she said, "I know why you like this place in its seclusion. I think it made you feel a place burdened with the memories of others who would be kind to you."

And by the very kindness of her remark and the intimacy of it a relation of almost friendship was established between them; and it was decided before they left that she should work for them as *femme de menage*.

As they walked through the garden, Mrs. Trevor ahead with the concierge, Eileen turned to Geoffrey.

"I never saw Mother like anything so much since Father died,—to be so interested in anything. Usually after a scene like this she would have refused to look at the house at all."

Geoffrey nodded. He, too, had noticed that the quiet apathy which had surrounded Emily Trevor since Anderson's death had dropped from her and that she seemed to have reflected the radiance of the silver sunlight. He thought, too, how extraordinarily these women with their fragile grace fitted into the picture, as though the finding of the Pavilion de Saint Merci was but a homecoming. He had been trying

for two years to dispel Emily's apathy, and he had seldom been able to. Now, of a sudden it had dropped from her like a cloak.

The first meal that he took with them intensified this impression. They fitted in as if they had always been living there. Mme. Etienne served the perfectly cooked dinner as though the Trevors were ladies of her own family. He wondered what it was that had happened to both of them, for if Emily had come shyly forth into life, Eileen appeared to him in the guise of a young woman, and this almost hurt him. It disturbed him and made him glad and yet, for her sake, pained him. He found it also curiously upsetting for he had always thought of her with the same tender impersonality that one feels for one's own child or one's sister.

The first week passed in lovely quiet, and yet a quiet that was curiously transforming to both women. It seemed to Geoffrey that each of them became more vivid and more lovable. It seemed that he had never known Eileen before and he threw himself into the excitement of this new friendship.

Emily was unconscious of their growing intimacy, until one afternoon Geoffrey and Eileen instead of coming in after a walk paced slowly up and down in the mellow spaces of the garden deep in talk. The place seemed bathed in yellow. The fallen sycamore leaves lay under foot like sunlight. A yellow cat walked sedately behind them. Emily had often watched them before as they walked up and down the garden, but to-day the sight of them turned her suddenly cold.

She saw Eileen turn her head toward Geoffrey and Geoffrey's tender gesture of response, and again fear clutched at her heart; and then suddenly from unknown depths in her came jealousy, which shook and frightened her. It was a sudden, quick emotion, a shuddering thing that carried with it almost hatred.

She recoiled from it shiveringly.

She had never been conscious of loving Geoffrey. She was not conscious of loving him now. She only knew he was a part of life itself and she knew also that this look of Eileen's was inimical to what meant life to her. She wondered if our

hidden depths are like the depths of the sea, where monsters lie asleep and where also lie gray bones of things long dead.

All that was tender in her was revolted by what she felt, her own husband still lived daily in her memory. It was her habit to talk with Geoffrey as if Anderson were still living, as if only yesterday he had said so and so. And this sudden flash of jealousy shocked her as much as though Anderson had been still living, and she had found out that she loved Geoffrey also.

So, because she could not have lived with herself another moment had she believed herself jealous of her own daughter, she was forced to lie to herself.

"I should have thought about it before," she thought. "It would be a most unsuitable marriage,—most unsuitable. Eileen isn't ready for marriage. She's only nineteen and her character's not formed, and Geoffrey is twelve years older than she." She comforted herself: "Oh, well! there's nothing in it—I'll go out and get the whole thing out of my head."

"Eileen," she called, "I am going to make some visits. Will you come with me, dear?"

Eileen's eyes sought her mother's and the light went out of her face; and Geoffrey thought for the hundredth time how like they were, both creatures of light and shallow, what was stormy in Eileen's temper was made gentle in Emily by experience and understanding. As he stood there before them, it seemed to him that his heart enveloped both of them in an embrace, as if he looked at but one woman. They were both women of that poignant sort that melted a man's very heart, who made that man, who loved them, love them so that love became almost an anguish. Now Eileen answered her mother:

"I don't think I'll go to-day."

"Please, dear," Emily insisted gently.

"I don't think I'll go," the girl answered. Her brows made a stormy line across her face.

"I hate to go out alone," there was a little break in Emily's voice.

They stood facing each other and between them was the

first definite conflict of wills that Geoffrey had ever witnessed, and his heart went out to Emily, and yet, there was something in Eileen's manner that moved him deeply. He knew well enough that she could not bear the thought to lose even a moment of their golden understanding that had suddenly blossomed between them. So for a moment, they stood both of them, Eileen defiant and Emily with so quenched a look in her face that Geoffrey wanted to put his arms around her and comfort her as he had the day when Anderson had died. Finally, Emily said:

"Very well, dear," and turned slowly away with the drooping look of someone deeply affected. The door closed behind her. Eileen turned on him a smile of flashing radiance.

"It's bad of me, but I can't care to-day. I can't care at all. Do you think it's wrong of me?" She had all her mother's wistfulness as though she were begging Geoffrey to understand, and suddenly he drew her to him. At this she drew her breath in swiftly and put her hand to her heart.

Her look and her gesture held so much joy and so much tenderness that in a moment Geoffrey was telling her that he had always loved her, even when she was a child, and that he had been waiting for her to grow up. So deep was his feeling that he forgot that it had been only within the last few days that he had thought of her as anything but a lovely child, or that his heart had beat at her approach. He had always been amused at her likeness to Emily and had thought how easy it would be to mix them up—then all at once he had seen her as if for the first time.

"I suppose I must have always loved you," Eileen said, "only I didn't know it for a long time. For a long time I did not think of you, some way, as exactly a man at all."

"That's flattering," said Morrow, "why not?"

"Well, I mean in the way you don't think of a relative as a man," Eileen explained, "you know, I had a curious idea about you——" She hesitated. Her delicate flush recalled Emily vividly to his mind, and her little air of embarrassment, as a child having been caught at something naughty, then she

went on. "Well, without reasoning about it, I took it for granted—well, that you were Mother's, you know."

A curious pain contracted Geoffrey's heart. This thought touched some very deep place in him.

"You mean that you thought I cared for her?" and he was surprised that he found it difficult to ask this.

"Well, not exactly *cared*. I didn't think of it in those terms. It's just as I said before, that you just were *Mother's*. I didn't think about your being in love with her."

They had come into the Pavilion by now.

"But you aren't Mother's!" she cried, "you aren't! You're mine!

At that Geoffrey drew her all yielding toward him. They stood together in the enveloping light of the golden room.

"Do you know when I first began to think about you? It was when we first came here. Do you know, Geoffrey, when we first came in this house to see it, I had a sudden feeling of having been here before and been here before with you; and as though it was some lovely and disturbing memory. Ever since that time I have been trying to make you like me."

She took his hand in hers and shyly put her head on it. She came out all the way to him in tender passion and yet with such sweet shyness that he felt that any hasty gesture on his part would startle her into flight.

"Do you feel, Geoffrey," she asked him presently, "as if you had always been waiting for this moment, waiting for it for a long time, just for me to sit close against you?" And as Geoffrey truthfully from his heart answered:

"Yes," he answered, while his inner consciousness thought, that was just what Emily might have said to him, and with this thought something hurt him, yet he felt strangely released as though he had been living in the dark for a long time and had been strangely deceiving himself and that by not recognizing his love sooner he had been denying himself life.

"How do you think your mother will like it?" he asked Eileen. She turned her head in her graceful, startled way.

"Why, she'll love it. We've all been so much together since Father died. And now, we'll always be together!" And suddenly she turned to him with imploring arms held out.

"Hold me close to you, Geoffrey! Don't let me go from you ever! When I said 'always' do you know what I felt? I felt—I felt as if it wasn't so."

"It wasn't so?" Geoffrey echoed stupidly.

"No, as if we had just had a beautiful moment and that was going to go as suddenly as it came." He held her to him and soothed her. She was shivering.

"Lovers always say such things. Lovers always think that what they feel is too beautiful to last."

"Oh, wouldn't it be an awful thing if she didn't like it?" she cried. She was silent, then with deep seriousness she said:

"If she did not like it, I tell you what we would do, Geoffrey. We'd just elope, wouldn't we?"

"Of course, we would!" Geoffrey cried.

"If Mother really didn't like it, would you marry me anyhow?" Eileen asked. This question smote him to the heart, and he knew then that in spite of his welling passion for Eileen he could never for one second do anything to darken Emily Trevor's life.

"Would you marry me if she didn't want you to?" he counter-questioned. She threw her arms about him with a fierce tenderness.

"I'd marry you in spite of anyone!" she cried, and then as if frightened of her own passion she released him and sat down across the room. The door opened and Emily came in.

"Now we can ask her," Geoffrey cried out joyously.

"Ask me what?" said Emily, enveloping them both in her lovely, baffling smile. A curious fear clutched at Geoffrey's heart, no power on earth could have made him say the words that came so lightly from Eileen's lips, as in a sweet and serious way she went to her mother and put her arms about her with an encompassing gesture as if to include her in her happiness.

"Ask you if you wouldn't be glad, dear, to have Geof-

frey and me get married. That's why I was so bad," she went on pleadingly, "that's why I couldn't go with you. I thought Geoffrey might ask me to marry him if I stayed."

"I'm so glad," Emily found herself saying smoothly. "Dear Geoffrey! Dear Eileen!" Her eyes shone.

Madame Etienne came in with the lamp. She glanced with a sudden strange comprehension from one to the other, and over her old face there swept a look of sudden fear. She set the lamp down noisily and steadied herself at the table. Then she hurried away, and the manner of her going gave the sinister impression of someone escaping from an unbearable sight.

The three stood looking at each other searching for words; it was as if the room had grown dark and cold, as if a door had opened upon some chill and tragic spot, that from this enclosed and dark place had come some old miasma that obscured all the simple, happy things of life.

All color had ebbed slowly from Emily's face and had left it chalk-white but for the scarlet of her mouth and the dark of her frightened eyes; then, suddenly Eileen flung herself on Geoffrey's neck, sobbing.

"Oh, I can't bear to have this happen! Oh, I can't bear to have this happen—not to-day!" He soothed her with gentle impatience.

"Silly thing, silly child, nothing's happened,—what's happened, Eileen darling?" And Emily, at the sight of Eileen's tears, echoed Geoffrey's words:

"Nothing at all has happened, Eileen dear!" But Eileen still clung to Geoffrey, sobbing:

"I know, I know, it's nothing. It isn't anything, and yet, you know she saw when she came in how it was between us all; she *saw,* and it was as though it gave her," her voice faltered again, "as though it gave her—a horror!" Geoffrey shook her ever so slightly.

"Eileen," he said firmly, "you're absurd. The old thing felt faint, or something. Isn't it so, Emily?"

"Why of course it's so," Emily was quite tranquil now, "go upstairs, silly little girl, and wash your eyes. If any-

body spoils this day for you, it'll be yourself; come on, we'll dress for dinner both of us. We'll put on the best things we have to celebrate."

When Madame Etienne announced, "Madame est servie," she too had dressed and she had set the table as though for guests. She smiled on them all in her usual friendly fashion.

"I permitted myself to send for a bottle of old wine," she told them. "You will wish to drink the health of Monsieur and Mad'moiselle, to-night, Madame, will you not?" By her manner she so completely ignored the scene of a moment before, that it was impossible to ask her if she had felt ill.

During the next days Eileen bloomed. There was a vividness in her joy that made people turn on the street to look at her, there was a quality about her that touched Geoffrey's heart and made Emily yearn over her, and which caused Madame Etienne to hover about her.

For herself, Emily had closed the door on her black half-hour. She told herself that she now accepted the whole thing fully, and that she had had merely a mother's reluctance in seeing her child go from her too soon. After all, she argued, who would make a better husband than Geoffrey, Anderson's tried friend, and her's? He had always seemed her contemporary, so that the idea at first held a strangeness for her.

Yet, as Eileen bloomed, Emily's new-found life seemed to ebb away. She longed for Anderson with a poignancy she hadn't known since the first days after his death. It seemed to her in her loneliness more than she could bear, to witness this young blossoming of love. It was as if in some vicarious way she shared every heart-beat of Eileen's, but that the sight of this love left her in a world of shadows, young yet, and living, but as though she in reality lived only with the dead.

She was cut off from life on all sides. If Eileen had loved someone else, she could have talked with Geoffrey and she needed intensely the sympathy which she couldn't demand

from him. In their happiness they were so deeply cruel. They were so oblivious of what memories the sight of them must arouse in her, and into what a deep gulf of loneliness the ever present spectacle of their love plunged her.

Between her and Mme. Etienne there grew some strange sympathy. More than once she surprised the old woman's gaze resting on her tenderly, as though she would mutely say, "I know, I know, I understand," and sometimes it seemed as though there was almost fear in this gaze.

After a time she found herself in a curious mood of suspense as though she were waiting for something to happen, and this mood communicated itself at last to Eileen. They were sitting together in the dusk and suddenly Eileen asked:

"What are you waiting for?"

"Nothing," Emily answered, a startled note in her voice.

"You seemed as though you were waiting for someone," Eileen insisted.

"No, I'm just listening," Emily surprised herself by acknowledging.

"Listening to what?"

"Listening to the past mostly, I think. Since we came here you know it's as if I heard them—the people who lived here before—talking more loudly all the time." Eileen jumped abruptly to her feet.

"I wish you wouldn't say such things! I wish you wouldn't feel such things!" What right has the past to come and put its dead hand into the present? It isn't fair of you!" She spoke with passion and with anger.

"Eileen!" cried Emily. She too arose to her feet. They stood facing each other, strangely alike, and for a moment infinitely hostile. The moment held terror for both of them; and Geoffrey as he came in found them confronting each other. Emily dropped limply in a chair.

"Why, Emily dear," he asked, "aren't you well?"

"Of course she's well; aren't you?" Eileen answered for her. She stood over her mother in an attitude of young

ruthlessness, " Aren't you well? " she demanded, and then to Geoffrey:

" Why shouldn't she be well? " Very white, Emily answered like a gentle echo,

" Of course I'm well. Why shouldn't I be? "

" You see! " Eileen cried in triumph. " You see! "

" Eileen! " Geoffrey said sternly, " I think you're cruel, —cruel and thoughtless! Emily *isn't* well, she hasn't been the same for days. I don't know what's wrong, but it's as if life's been ebbing away drop by drop from her—and we've not noticed. What's the matter, Emily? Emily, dear, what's the matter? " But Emily, at the sound of his sympathy and understanding, had closed her eyes and difficult tears slid down her cheeks.

Eileen stood watching Geoffrey and her mother, her eyes narrowing, her face hardening with all the hardness of affronted youth.

" *Cruel!* " she said again. Her voice dropped into a tone of low menace. " No one shall speak like that to me! " Geoffrey's back was toward her, while he wiped Emily's tears away and patted her hand murmuring:

" Don't, Emily,—don't dear,——"

" Do you hear? " Eileen went on; her voice was like the edge of a knife, " *No one shall speak to me like that——!*"

" Yes, I hear you," Geoffrey answered without turning his head, " I hear you making a scene while your mother's suffering! "

Eileen stood as if seeing them for the first time, examining them with dreadful scrutiny. Slowly her face set, she looked old, older than Emily, and then very slowly she walked from the room.

" Eileen," her mother called, " Eileen, don't go! "

" Very well," she answered, " I'll get the lamp from Madame Etienne, I think, I don't want her coming in looking at us as though she'd seen ghosts." She brought back the lamp and set it down with even precision.

" For heaven's sake," Geoffrey cried, " what's this all about? What a tempest over nothing! "

"I didn't make the tempest," came Eileen's hard little voice.

"Well, dear, you unmake it then," he conciliated.

"You can't unmake things that have happened," she gave back sharply.

"Eileen," her mother implored, "anybody can unmake anything by just being good enough." She looked around helplessly. "Where did it all come from,—this storm?"

"Where, indeed?" Eileen inquired. There was in her voice disdain and in the glance she cast at her mother, suspicion.

"I'm going to dress for dinner now," she said and left them. It was only when Eileen had gone that Emily noticed that Geoffrey still held her hand, and that in its warmth there was immense solace.

"It's nothing, Geoffrey, really nothing," she assured him, "just shadows. Sometimes I get enclosed in the sad house of myself and I can't cry for help."

"Not even to me, when you know I'm always there, Emily?" He was profoundly shocked and wounded. "Why not?"

"I don't know why—I just can't, that's all." They were silent a moment, then Emily said with a tender little smile:

"I know just how Eileen feels. I know it as though I were Eileen herself. I used to be like that, too, Geoffrey, when I was young—glittering and hard sometimes when anything interfered with what I wanted, even if it was only a mood I wanted."

"I don't believe it, Emily, you were never as unkind in all your life."

"Hush, Geoffrey," she warned him. "Hush, you mustn't say things like that."

"I can't bear to have her thoughtless—I won't have you hurt, Emily. No one shall hurt you, Emily—not even for a moment." There was a savage tenderness in his voice, and even though she again warned him with—"Hush, Geoffrey," his championship of her was immeasurably sweet.

Dinner was a resolute and painstaking ignoring of all

that occurred, a certain keeping up of appearances for the sake of Madame Etienne, though at each little overture of tenderness on Geoffrey's part Eileen became rigid. She talked gaily and seemed to take a malicious delight in erecting an impenetrable wall between herself and Geoffrey.

When Emily went early to bed and left them, Geoffrey went over to Eileen and would have taken her in his arms. He sensed that behind her wall of hardness and of gaiety she was suffering profoundly.

"Eileen," he said, "don't do this to you and to me. I know what's happening to you, behind this shining hardness of yours."

"What's that?" she asked him.

"Well, it's as if behind this rampart of yours, your soul's softening itself into everything that's made your mother all softness and kindness and understanding." At this she arose very softly and deliberately.

"Goodnight, Geoffrey dear," she said, "mother, as you've pointed out, isn't well and I'm going up to take care of her."

"Don't go like that—not in that mood," he implored, "at least kiss me good-night, Eileen."

"No, not to-night, I think," she said after deliberate consideration of the question.

"Then at least let me kiss you in kindness." She came toward him submissively and turned him a cool cheek, and it seemed to Geoffrey as if he was kissing a stranger. He left, furious that he had to relinquish Emily to Eileen's uncomprehending hardness; yet his heart was rent for Eileen, for he knew she was suffering, although he couldn't understand why, and still his instinct was of service and help as it had always been to her and to Emily.

During the next days Eileen treated him with deliberate and cruel perversity. She agreed to every suggestion of his, and all the time held herself mockingly inaccessible, but the thing that kindled in him a smoldering anger was that she was as hard to Emily as she was to him. She made many engagements with friends of hers which excluded them both.

Left alone with Emily he felt himself solaced by her kindness, her unspoken sympathy bathed the wounds of his spirit. They permitted themselves no discussion of the situation. Once he asked Emily:

"Do you know what's the matter?" And her only answer was to shake her head, and her only consolation was:

"It's a mood that will pass, Geoffrey."

It was that afternoon that Mme. Etienne came to Emily.

"Madame," she said and in her tone there was a deep seriousness, "Paris is not agreeing with Mad'moiselle. This often happens to Americans in this northern climate. When my lady entertained many Americans, I heard them say that they were unaccustomed to the slanting rays of the northern sun. Pardon, Madame, but in Madame's place I would take Mad'moiselle to the Midi at once—it would also suit Madame—there was a time when Madame herself seemed ill to me." She looked at Emily and her old eyes held warning and sadness and fear.

When Geoffrey came in for tea, Emily told him of this conversation.

"When Eileen comes home," she suggested, "take her out and talk to her about it. You know Mme. Etienne almost frightened me—— She looked as she did the first day——"

"But you're better, Emily," said Geoffrey, "you've been looking a lot better in spite of the strain of things—and all that's the matter with Eileen is her infernal obstinacy. I'll take her out, though, and talk to her about going away, if you want me to."

They were not gone long. When they came in Eileen went to her room and Geoffrey joined Emily in the salon. The strained look that had been in his face was gone. He stood silently before Emily for a moment as if waiting for her to speak.

"What's happened, Geoffrey?" she asked him gently.

"She doesn't love me any more—she's broken with me—and I—Emily, I'm glad! I'm glad! I never loved her, I suppose I thought of you as belonging to Anderson forever; and Eileen was so like you—but it's you, Emily—it's always

been you, and you needed me—as I needed you! I've been loving you through Eileen and I didn't know it until the day she hurt you. Oh, Emily, she doesn't love me—she doesn't love me—she doesn't love me at all—she had the instinct of youth toward love and toward me, but it wasn't me, it never was me, and it never was Eileen! I loved her when she was like you, but when she was like herself, I felt as if I were in an alien country where forever I should be homesick for the thing I love. With her I should have died of homesickness, Emily—for home."

And at each of Geoffrey's words Emily's soul rejoiced. It seemed to her she'd been living in darkness and shadow and at last had come out into the sunlight. She passionately wanted to believe it was true that Eileen never cared, and so she did believe it, and for one golden moment, they stood with their hands clasped, looking into each other's eyes. Then there was a little rustle and the noise of a door closing.

"What was that!" Emily whispered—silence—there was not a sound in the whole house.

They stood staring at each other, possessed by a strange feeling of guilt. Then suddenly—

"Eileen!" cried Emily—her voice echoed horribly through the silent house. They stared at each other, and instead of the love that had been in their eyes, they looked at each other like frightened conspirators.

They could not find words to break through the haunted silence and for a moment they seemed deprived of action, unable to face the meaning of that little rustle and the closing of the door. At last—

"Do you think she was there?" Emily whispered.

Geoffrey didn't know. He stood still as though frozen with the fear that had gripped his heart. Then came the sound of rapid footsteps and Madame Etienne threw herself into the room.

"Madame, Madame," she cried, "Mad'moiselle has gone! She ran hatless into the street—through the little door—the bolts had rusted, and I ran after her. She fled like something demented down the street—Oh, God!—she

looked like Mme. Paul when she fled down the garden path from the Pavilion. It's my fault," she went on, her voice rising to a shriek, "it's my fault; the Pavilion of Saint Merci is a house accursed, and so has always been. It distils from its walls some venom which poisons the spirit. No one who has youth can live within it. I have known it to kill their souls and their faith in everything which made life dear to them. Its poison is jealousy and it has poisoned you. I saw you die of jealousy of your child. I saw her face grow white for jealousy of you—and now your life together is destroyed! It was as though you have one common fountain of life which both of you could not use and she has gone. Never any more—never any more, can love come between the three of you——"

They stood a second frozen, looking at each other as though from some immense distance.

"Emily," Geoffrey cried.

She raised her hand in a gesture of passionate dissent.

"Come," she cried to Madame Etienne. "We must look for her together."

The Woman at Seven Brothers

BY WILBUR DANIEL STEELE

I TELL you, sir, I was innocent. I didn't know any more about the world at twenty-two than some do at twelve. My uncle and aunt in Duxbury brought me up strict; I studied hard in high school, I worked hard after hours, and I went to church twice on Sundays, and I can't see it's right to put me in a place like this, with crazy people. Oh yes, I know they're crazy—you can't tell *me*. As for what they said in court about finding her with her husband, that's the Inspector's lie, sir, because he's down on me, and wants to make it look like my fault.

No, sir, I can't say as I thought she was handsome—not at first. For one thing, her lips were too thin and white, and her color was bad. I'll tell you a fact, sir; that first day I came off to the Light I was sitting on my cot in the store-room (that's where the assistant keeper sleeps at the Seven Brothers), as lonesome as I could be, away from home for the first time and the water all around me, and, even though it was a calm day, pounding enough on the ledge to send a kind of a *woom-woom-woom* whining up through all that solid rock of the tower. And when old Fedderson poked his head down from the living-room with the sunshine above making a kind of bright frame around his hair and whiskers, to give me a cheery, "Make yourself to home, son!" I remember I said to myself: "*He's* all right. I'll get along with *him*. But his wife's enough to sour milk." That was queer, because she was so much under him in age—'long about twenty-eight or so, and him nearer fifty. But that's what I said, sir.

Of course that feeling wore off, same as any feeling will wear off sooner or later in a place like the Seven Brothers. Cooped up in a place like that you come to know folks so well that you forget what they *do* look like. There was a long time I never noticed her, any more than you'd notice the cat. We used to sit of an evening around the table, as if you were Fedderson there, and me here, and her somewhere back there, in the rocker, knitting. Fedderson would be working on his Jacob's-ladder, and I'd be reading. He'd been working on that Jacob's-ladder a year, I guess, and every time the Inspector came off with the tender he was so astonished to see how good that ladder was that the old man would go to work and make it better. That's all he lived for.

If I was reading, as I say, I daren't take my eyes off the book, or Fedderson had me. And then he'd begin—what the Inspector said about him. How surprised the member of the board had been, that time, to see everything so clean about the light. What the Inspector had said about Fedderson's being stuck here in a second-class light—best keeper on the coast. And so on and so on, till either he or I had to go aloft and have a look at the wicks.

He'd been there twenty-three years, all told, and he'd got used to the feeling that he was kept down unfair—so used to it, I guess, that he fed on it, and told himself how folks ashore would talk when he was dead and gone—best keeper on the coast—kept down unfair. Not that he said that to me. No, he was far too loyal and humble and respectful, doing his duty without complaint, as anybody could see.

And all that time, night after night, hardly ever a word out of the woman. As I remember it, she seemed more like a piece of furniture than anything else—not even a very good cook, nor over and above tidy. One day, when he and I were trimming the lamp, he passed the remark that his *first* wife used to dust the lens and take a pride in it. Not that he said a word against Anna, though. He never said a word against any living mortal; he was too upright.

I don't know how it came about; or, rather, I *do* know, but it was so sudden, and so far away from my thoughts, that it shocked me, like the world turned over. It was at prayers. That night I remember Fedderson was uncommon long-winded. We'd had a batch of newspapers out by the tender, and at such times the old man always made a long watch of it, getting the world straightened out. For one thing, the United States minister to Turkey was dead. Well, from him and his soul, Fedderson got on to Turkey and the Methodist college there, and from that to heathen in general. He rambled on and on, like the surf on the ledge, *woom-woom-woom*, never coming to an end.

You know how you'll be at prayers sometimes. My mind strayed. I counted the canes in the chair-seat where I was kneeling; I plaited a corner of the table-cloth between my fingers for a spell, and by and by my eyes went wandering up the back of the chair.

The woman, sir, was looking at me. Her chair was back to mine, close, and both our heads were down in the shadow under the edge of the table, with Fedderson clear over on the other side by the stove. And there were her two eyes hunting mine between the spindles in the shadow. You won't believe me, sir, but I tell you I felt like jumping to my feet and running out of the room—it was so queer.

I don't know what her husband was praying about after that. His voice didn't mean anything, no more than the seas on the ledge away down there. I went to work to count the canes in the seat again, but all my eyes were in the top of my head. It got so I couldn't stand it. We were at the Lord's prayer, saying it sing-song together, when I had to look up again. And there her two eyes were, between the spindles, hunting mine. Just then all of us were saying, "Forgive us our trespasses—" I thought of it afterward.

When we got up she was turned the other way, but I couldn't help seeing her cheeks were red. It was terrible. I wondered if Fedderson would notice, though I might have known he wouldn't—not him. He was in too much of a hurry to get at his Jacob's-ladder, and then he had to tell me for the tenth time what the Inspector 'd said that day about getting him another light—Kingdom Come, maybe, he said.

I made some excuse or other and got away. Once in the store-room, I sat down on my cot and stayed there a long time, feeling queerer than anything. I read a chapter in the Bible, I don't know why. After I'd got my boots off I sat with them in my hands for as much as an hour, I guess, staring at the oil-tank and its lopsided shadow on the wall. I tell you, sir, I was shocked. I was only twenty-two, remember, and I was shocked and horrified.

And when I did turn in, finally, I didn't sleep at all well. Two or three times I came to, sitting straight up in bed. Once I got up and opened the outer door to have a look. The water was like glass, dim, without a breath of wind, and the moon just going down. Over on the black shore I made out two lights in a village, like a pair of eyes watching. Lonely? My, yes! Lonely and nervous. I had a horror of her, sir. The dinghy-boat hung on its davits just there in front of the door, and for a minute I had an awful hankering to climb into it, lower away, and row off, no matter where. It sounds foolish.

Well, it seemed foolish next morning, with the sun shining and everything as usual—Fedderson sucking his pen and wagging his head over his eternal "log," and his wife down in the rocker with her head in the newspaper, and her breakfast work still waiting. I guess that jarred it out of me more than anything else—sight of her slouched down there, with her stringy, yellow hair and her dusty apron and the pale back of her neck, reading the Society Notes. *Society Notes!* Think of it! For the first time since I came to Seven Brothers I wanted to laugh.

I guess I did laugh when I went aloft to clean the lamp and found everything so free and breezy, gulls flying high and little white-caps making under a westerly. It was like feeling a big load dropped off your shoulders. Fedderson came up with his dust-rag and cocked his head at me.

"What's the matter, Ray?" said he.

"Nothing," said I. And then I



Drawn by F. Walter Taylor Engraved by H. L[illegible]

READING THE SOCIETY NOTES, AND HER BREAKFAST WORK STILL WAITING

couldn't help it. "Seems kind of out of place for society notes," said I, "out here at Seven Brothers."

He was the other side of the lens, and when he looked at me he had a thousand eyes, all sober. For a minute I thought he was going on dusting, but then he came out and sat down on a sill.

"Sometimes," said he, "I get to thinking it may be a mite dull for her out here. She's pretty young, Ray. Not much more'n a girl, hardly."

"Not much more'n a *girl!*" It gave me a turn, sir, as though I'd seen my aunt in short dresses.

"It's a good home for her, though," he went on, slow. "I've seen a lot worse ashore, Ray. Of course if I could get a shore light—"

"Kingdom Come's a shore light."

He looked at me out of his deep-set eyes, and then he turned them around the light-room, where he'd been so long.

"No," said he, wagging his head. "It ain't for such as me."

I never saw so humble a man.

"But look here," he went on, more cheerful. "As I was telling her just now, a month from yesterday's our fourth anniversary, and I'm going to take her ashore for the day and give her a holiday —new hat and everything. A girl wants a mite of excitement now and then, Ray."

There it was again, that "girl." It gave me the fidgets, sir. I had to do something about it. It's close quarters in a light for last names, and I'd taken to calling him Uncle Matt soon after I came. Now, when I was at table that noon, I spoke over to where she was standing by the stove, getting him another help of chowder.

"I guess I'll have some, too, *Aunt* Anna," said I, matter of fact.

She never said a word nor gave a sign —just stood there kind of round-shouldered, dipping the chowder. And that night at prayers I hitched my chair around the table, with its back the other way.

You get awful lazy in a light-house, some ways. No matter how much tinkering you've got, there's still a lot of time, and there's such a thing as too much reading. The changes in weather get monotonous, too, by and by; the light burns the same on a thick night as it does on a fair one. Of course there's the ships, north-bound, south-bound—wind-jammers, freighters, passenger-boats full of people. In the watches at night you can see their lights go by, and wonder what they are, how they're laden, where they'll fetch up, and all. I used to do that almost every evening when it was my first watch, sitting out on the walk-around up there with my legs hanging over the edge and my chin propped on the railing—lazy. The Boston boat was the prettiest to see, with her three tiers of port-holes lit, like a string of pearls wrapped round and round a woman's neck—well away, too, for the ledge must have made a couple of hundred fathoms off the Light, like a white dog-tooth of a breaker, even on the darkest night.

Well, I was lolling there one night, as I say, watching the Boston boat go by, not thinking of anything special, when I heard the door on the other side of the tower open and footsteps coming around to me.

By and by I nodded toward the boat and passed the remark that she was fetching in uncommon close to-night. No answer. I made nothing of that, for oftentimes Fedderson wouldn't answer, and after I'd watched the lights crawling on through the dark a spell, just to make conversation I said I guessed there'd be a bit of weather before long.

"I've noticed," said I, "when there's weather coming on, and the wind in the northeast, you can hear the orchestra playing aboard of her just over there. I make it out now. Do you?"

"Yes. Oh—yes! *I hear it all right!*"

You can imagine I started. It wasn't him, but *her*. And there was something in the way she said that speech, sir—something—well—unnatural. Like a hungry animal snapping at a person's hand.

I turned and looked at her sidewise. She was standing by the railing, leaning a little outward, the top of her from the waist picked out bright by the lens behind her. I didn't know what in the world to say, and yet I had a feeling I ought not to sit there mum.

"I wonder," said I, "what that captain's thinking of, fetching in so handy

to-night. It's no way. I tell you, if 'twasn't for this light, she'd go to work and pile up on the ledge some thick night—"

She turned at that and stared straight into the lens. I didn't like the look of her face. Somehow, with its edges cut hard all around and its two eyes closed down to slits, like a cat's, it made a kind of mask.

"And then," I went on, uneasy enough—"and then where'd all their music be of a sudden, and their goings-on and their singing—"

"And dancing!" She clipped me off so quick it took my breath.

"D-d-dancing?" said I.

"That's dance-music," said she. She was looking at the boat again.

"How do you know?" I felt I had to keep on talking.

Well, sir—she laughed. I looked at her. She had on a shawl of some stuff or other that shined in the light; she had it pulled tight around her with her two hands in front at her breast, and I saw her shoulders swaying in tune.

"How do I *know?*" she cried. Then she laughed again, the same kind of a laugh. It was queer, sir, to see her, and to hear her. She turned, as quick as that, and leaned toward me. "Don't you know how to dance, Ray?" said she.

"N-no," I managed, and I was going to say "*Aunt Anna,*" but the thing choked in my throat. I tell you she was looking square at me all the time with her two eyes and moving with the music as if she didn't know it. By Heavens, sir, it came over me of a sudden that she wasn't so bad looking, after all. I guess I must have sounded like a fool.

"You—you see," said I, "she's cleared the rip there now, and the music's gone. You—you—hear?"

"Yes," said she, turning back slow. "That's where it stops every night—night after night—it stops just there—at the rip."

When she spoke again her voice was different. I never heard the like of it, thin and taut as a thread. It made me shiver, sir.

"I hate 'em!" That's what she said. "I hate 'em all. I'd like to see 'em dead. I'd love to see 'em torn apart on the rocks, night after night. I could bathe my hands in their blood, night after night."

And do you know, sir, I saw it with my own eyes, her hands moving in each other above the rail. But it was her voice, though. I didn't know what to do, or what to say, so I poked my head through the railing and looked down at the water. I don't think I'm a coward, sir, but it was like a cold—ice-cold—hand, taking hold of my beating heart.

When I looked up finally, she was gone. By and by I went in and had a look at the lamp, hardly knowing what I was about. Then, seeing by my watch it was time for the old man to come on duty, I started to go below. In the Seven Brothers, you understand, the stair goes down in a spiral through a well against the south wall, and first there's the door to the keeper's room, and then you come to another, and that's the living-room, and then down to the store-room. And at night, if you don't carry a lantern, it's as black as the pit.

Well, down I went, sliding my hand along the rail, and as usual I stopped to give a rap on the keeper's door, in case he was taking a nap after supper. Sometimes he did.

I stood there, blind as a bat, with my mind still up on the walk-around. There was no answer to my knock. I hadn't expected any. Just from habit, and with my right foot already hanging down for the next step, I reached out to give the door one more tap for luck.

Do you know, sir, my hand didn't fetch up on anything. The door had been there a second before, and now the door wasn't there. My hand just went on going through the dark, on and on, and I didn't seem to have sense or power enough to stop it. There didn't seem any air in the well to breathe, and my ears were drumming to the surf—that's how scared I was. And then my hand touched the flesh of a face, and something in the dark said, "Oh!" no louder than a sigh.

Next thing I know, sir, I was down in the living-room, warm and yellow-lit, with Fedderson cocking his head at me across the table, where he was at that eternal Jacob's-ladder of his.

"What's the matter, Ray?" said he. "Lord's sake, Ray!"

"Nothing," said I. Then I think I told him I was sick. That night I wrote a letter to A. L. Peters, the grain-dealer in Duxbury, asking for a job—even though it wouldn't go ashore for a couple of weeks, just the writing of it made me feel better.

It's hard to tell you how those two weeks went by. I don't know why, but I felt like hiding in a corner all the time. I had to come to meals. But I didn't look at her, though, not once, unless it was by accident. Fedderson thought I was still ailing and nagged me to death with advice and so on. One thing I took care not to do, I can tell you, and that was to knock on his door till I'd made certain he wasn't below in the living-room—though I was tempted to.

Yes, sir; that's a queer thing, and I wouldn't tell you if I hadn't set out to give you the truth. Night after night, stopping there on the landing in that black pit, the air gone out of my lungs and the surf drumming in my ears and sweat standing cold on my neck—and one hand lifting up in the air—God forgive me, sir! Maybe I did wrong not to look at her more, drooping about her work in her gingham apron, with her hair stringing.

When the Inspector came off with the tender, that time, I told him I was through. That's when he took the dislike to me, I guess, for he looked at me kind of sneering and said, soft as I was, I'd have to put up with it till next relief. And then, said he, there'd be a whole house-cleaning at Seven Brothers, because he'd gotten Fedderson the berth at Kingdom Come. And with that he slapped the old man on the back.

I wish you could have seen Fedderson, sir. He sat down on my cot as if his knees had given 'way. Happy? You'd think he'd be happy, with all his dreams come true. Yes, he was happy, beaming all over—for a minute. Then, sir, he began to shrivel up. It was like seeing a man cut down in his prime before your eyes. He began to wag his head.

"No," said he. "No, no; it's not for such as me. I'm good enough for Seven Brothers, and that's all, Mr. Bayliss. That's all."

And for all the Inspector could say, that's what he stuck to. He'd figured himself a martyr so many years, nursed that injustice like a mother with her first-born, sir; and now in his old age, so to speak, they weren't to rob him of it. Fedderson was going to wear out his life in a second-class light, and folks would talk—that was his idea. I heard him hailing down as the tender was casting off:

"See you to-morrow, Mr. Bayliss. Yep. Coming ashore with the wife for a spree. Anniversary. Yep."

But he didn't sound much like a spree. They *had* robbed him, partly, after all. I wondered what *she* thought about it. I didn't know till night. She didn't show up to supper, which Fedderson and I got ourselves—had a headache, he said. It was my early watch. I went and lit up and came back to read a spell. He was finishing off the Jacob's-ladder, and thoughtful, like a man that's lost a treasure. Once or twice I caught him looking about the room on the sly. It was pathetic, sir.

Going up the second time, I stepped out on the walk-around to have a look at things. She was there on the seaward side, wrapped in that silky thing. A fair sea was running across the ledge and it was coming on a little thick—not too thick. Off to the right the Boston boat was blowing, *whroom-whroom!* creeping up on us, quarter-speed. There was another fellow behind her, and a fisherman's conch farther off-shore.

I don't know why, but I stopped beside her and leaned on the rail. She didn't appear to notice me, one way or another. We stood and we stood, listening to the whistles, and the longer we stood the more it got on my nerves, her not noticing me. I suppose she'd been too much on my mind lately. I began to be put out. I scraped my feet. I coughed. By and by I said out loud:

"Look here, I guess I better get out the fog-horn and give those fellows a toot."

"Why?" said she, without moving her head—calm as that.

"*Why?*" It gave me a turn, sir. For a minute I stared at her. "Why? Because if she don't pick up this light before very many minutes she'll be too close in to wear—tide 'll have her on the rocks—that's why!"

I couldn't see her face, but I could see one of her silk shoulders lift a little, like a shrug. And there I kept on staring at her, a dumb one, sure enough. I know what brought me to was hearing the Boston boat's three sharp toots as she picked up the light—mad as anything—and swung her helm a-port. I turned away from her, sweat stringing down my face, and walked around to the door. It was just as well, too, for the feed-pipe was plugged in the lamp and the wicks were popping. She'd have been out in another five minutes, sir.

When I'd finished, I saw that woman standing in the doorway. Her eyes were bright. I had a horror of her, sir, a living horror.

"If only the light had been out," said she, low and sweet.

"God forgive you," said I. "You don't know what you're saying."

She went down the stair into the well, winding out of sight, and as long as I could see her, her eyes were watching mine. When I went, myself, after a few minutes, she was waiting for me on that first landing, standing still in the dark. She took hold of my hand, though I tried to get it away.

"Good-by," said she in my ear.

"Good-by?" said I. I didn't understand.

"You heard what he said to-day—about Kingdom Come? Be it so—on his own head. I'll never come back here. Once I set foot ashore—I've got friends in Brightonboro, Ray."

I got away from her and started on down. But I stopped. "Brightonboro?" I whispered back. "Why do you tell *me?*" My throat was raw to the words, like a sore.

"So you'd know," said she.

Well, sir, I saw them off next morning, down that new Jacob's-ladder into the dinghy-boat, her in a dress of blue velvet and him in his best cutaway and derby—rowing away, smaller and smaller, the two of them. And then I went back and sat on my cot, leaving the door open and the ladder still hanging down the wall, along with the boat falls.

I don't know whether it was relief, or what. I suppose I must have been worked up even more than I'd thought those past weeks, for now it was all over I was like a rag. I got down on my knees, sir, and prayed to God for the salvation of my soul, and when I got up and climbed to the living-room it was half-past twelve by the clock. There was rain on the windows and the sea was running blue-black under the sun. I'd sat there all that time not knowing there was a squall.

It was funny; the glass stood high, but those black squalls kept coming and going all afternoon, while I was at work up in the light-room. And I worked hard, to keep myself busy. First thing I knew it was five, and no sign of the boat yet. It began to get dim and kind of purplish-gray over the land. The sun was down. I lit up, made everything snug, and got out the night-glasses to have another look for that boat. He'd said he intended to get back before five. No sign. And then, standing there, it came over me that of course he wouldn't be coming off—he'd be hunting *her*, poor old fool. It looked like I had to stand two men's watches that night.

Never mind. I felt like myself again, even if I hadn't had any dinner or supper. Pride came to me that night on the walk-around, watching the boats go by—little boats, big boats, the Boston boat with all her pearls and her dance-music. They couldn't see me; they didn't know who I was; but to the last of them, they depended on *me*. They say a man must be born again. Well, I was born again. I breathed deep in the wind.

Dawn broke hard and red as a dying coal. I put out the light and started to go below. Born again; yes, sir. I felt so good I whistled in the well, and when I came to that first door on the stair I reached out in the dark to give it a rap for luck. And then, sir, the hair prickled all over my scalp, when I found my hand just going on and on through the air, the same as it had gone once before, and all of a sudden I wanted to yell, because I thought I was going to touch flesh. It's funny what their just forgetting to close their door did to me, isn't it?

Well, I reached for the latch and pulled it to with a bang and ran down as if a ghost was after me. I got up some coffee and bread and bacon for breakfast. I drank the coffee. But somehow

I couldn't eat, all along of that open door. The light in the room was blood. I got to thinking. I thought how she'd talked about those men, women and children on the rocks, and how she'd made to bathe her hands over the rail. I almost jumped out of my chair then; it seemed for a wink she was there beside the stove, watching me with that queer half-smile—really, I seemed to see her for a flash across the red table-cloth in the red light of dawn.

"Look here!" said I to myself, sharp enough; and then I gave myself a good laugh and went below. There I took a look out of the door, which was still open, with the ladder hanging down. I made sure to see the poor old fool come pulling around the point before very long now.

My boots were hurting a little, and, taking them off, I lay down on the cot to rest, and somehow I went to sleep. I had horrible dreams. I saw her again standing in that blood-red kitchen, and she seemed to be washing her hands, and the surf on the ledge was whining up the tower, louder and louder all the time, and what it whined was, "Night after night—night after night." What woke me was cold water in my face.

The store-room was in gloom. That scared me at first; I thought night had come, and remembered the light. But then I saw the gloom was of a storm. The floor was shining wet, and the water in my face was spray, flung up through the open door. When I ran to close it it almost made me dizzy to see the gray-and-white breakers marching past. The land was gone; the sky shut down heavy overhead; there was a piece of wreckage on the back of a swell, and the Jacob's-ladder was carried clean away. How that sea had picked up so quick I can't think. I looked at my watch and it wasn't four in the afternoon yet.

When I closed the door, sir, it was almost dark in the store-room. I'd never been in the Light before in a gale of wind. I wondered why I was shivering so, till I found it was the floor below me shivering, and the walls and stair. Horrible crunchings and grindings ran away up the tower, and now and then there was a great thud somewhere, like a cannon-shot in a cave. I tell you, sir, I was alone, and I was in a mortal fright for a minute or so. And yet I had to get myself together. There was the light up there not tended to, and an early dark coming on and a heavy night and all, and I had to go. And I had to pass that door.

You'll say it's foolish, sir, and maybe it *was* foolish. Maybe it was because I hadn't eaten. But I began thinking of that door up there the minute I set foot on the stair, and all the way up through that howling dark well I dreaded to pass it. I told myself I wouldn't stop. I didn't stop. I felt the landing underfoot and I went on, four steps, five—and then I couldn't. I turned and went back. I put out my hand and it went on into nothing. That door, sir, was open again.

I left it be; I went on up to the light-room and set to work. It was Bedlam there, sir, screeching Bedlam, but I took no notice. I kept my eyes down. I trimmed those seven wicks, sir, as neat as ever they were trimmed; I polished the brass till it shone, and I dusted the lens. It wasn't till that was done that I let myself look back to see who it was standing there, half out of sight in the well. It was her, sir.

"Where'd you come from?" I asked. I remember my voice was sharp.

"Up Jacob's-ladder," said she, and hers was like the syrup of flowers.

I shook my head. I was savage, sir. "The ladder's carried away."

"I cast it off," said she, with a smile.

"Then," said I, "you must have come while I was asleep." Another thought came on me, heavy as a ton of lead. "And where's *he?*" said I. "Where's the boat?"

"He's drowned," said she, as easy as that. "And I let the boat go adrift. You wouldn't hear me when I called."

"But look here," said I. "If you came through the store-room, why didn't you wake me up? Tell me that?" It sounds foolish enough, me standing like a lawyer in court, trying to prove she *couldn't* be there.

She didn't answer for a moment. I guess she sighed, though I couldn't hear for the gale, and her eyes grew soft, sir, so soft.

"I couldn't," said she. "You looked so peaceful—dear one."

My cheeks and neck went hot, sir, as if a warm iron was laid on them. I didn't know what to say. I began to stammer, "What do you mean -" but she was going back down the stair, out of sight. My God! sir, and I used not to think she was good-looking!

I started to follow her. I wanted to know what she meant. Then I said to myself, "If I don't go—if I wait here—she'll come back." And I went to the weather side and stood looking out of the window. Not that there was much to see. It was growing dark, and the Seven Brothers looked like the mane of a running horse, a great, vast, white horse running into the wind. The air was a-welter with it. I caught one peep of a fisherman, lying down flat trying to weather the ledge, and I said, "God help them all to-night," and then I went hot at sound of that "God."

I was right about her, though. She was back again. I wanted her to speak first, before I turned, but she wouldn't. I didn't hear her go out; I didn't know what she was up to till I saw her coming outside on the walk-around, drenched wet already. I pounded on the glass for her to come in and not be a fool; if she heard she gave no sign of it.

There she stood, and there I stood watching her. Lord, sir—was it just that I'd never had eyes to see? Or are there women who bloom? Her clothes were shining on her, like a carving, and her hair was let down like a golden curtain tossing and streaming in the gale, and there she stood with her lips half open, drinking, and her eyes half- closed, gazing straight away over the Seven Brothers, and her shoulders swaying, as if in tune with the wind and water and all the ruin. And when I looked at her hands over the rail, sir, they were moving in each other as if they bathed, and then I remembered, sir.

A cold horror took me. I knew now why she had come back again. She wasn't a woman—she was a devil. I turned my back on her. I said to myself: "It's time to light up. You've got to light up" -like that, over and over, out loud. My hand was shivering so I could hardly find a match; and when I scratched it, it only flared a second and then went out in the back draught from the open door. She was standing in the doorway, looking at me. It's queer, sir, but I felt like a child caught in mischief.

"I—I—was going to light up," I managed to say, finally.

"Why?" said she. No, I can't say it as she did.

"*Why?*" said I. "*My God!*"

She came nearer, laughing, as if with pity, low, you know. "Your God? And who is your God? What is God? What is anything on a night like this?"

I drew back from her. All I could say anything about was the light.

"Why not the dark?" said she. "Dark is softer than light—tenderer—dearer than light. From the dark up here, away up here in the wind and storm, we can watch the ships go by, you and I. And you love me so. You've loved me so long, Ray."

"I never have!" I struck out at her. "I don't! I don't!"

Her voice was lower than ever, but there was the same laughing pity in it. "Oh yes, you have." And she was near me again.

"I have?" I yelled. "I'll show you! I'll show you if I have!"

I got another match, sir, and scratched it on the brass. I gave it to the first wick, the little wick that's inside all the others. It bloomed like a yellow flower. "*I have!*" I yelled, and gave it to the next.

Then there was a shadow, and I saw she was leaning beside me, her two elbows on the brass, her two arms stretched out above the wicks, her bare forearms and wrists and hands. I gave a gasp:

"Take care! You'll burn them! For God's sake—"

She didn't move or speak. The match burned my fingers and went out, and all I could do was stare at those arms of hers, helpless. I'd never noticed her arms before. They were rounded and graceful and covered with a soft down, like a breath of gold. Then I heard her speaking, close to my ear.

"Pretty arms," she said. "Pretty arms!"

I turned. Her eyes were fixed on mine. They seemed heavy, as if with sleep, and yet between their lids they were two wells, deep and deep, and as if



Drawn by F Walter Taylor

"POOR BOY, YOU LOVE ME SO—DON'T YOU?"

they held all the things I'd ever thought or dreamed in them. I looked away from them, at her lips. Her lips were red as poppies, heavy with redness. They moved, and I heard them speaking:

"Poor boy, you love me so, and you want to kiss me—don't you?"

"No," said I. But I couldn't turn around. I looked at her hair. I'd always thought it was stringy hair. Some hair curls naturally with damp, they say, and perhaps that was it, for there were pearls of wet on it, and it was thick and shimmering around her face, making soft shadows by the temples. There was green in it, queer strands of green like braids.

"What is it?" said I.

"Nothing but weed," said she, with that slow, sleepy smile.

Somehow or other I felt calmer than I had any time. "Look here," said I. "I'm going to light this lamp." I took out a match, scratched it, and touched the third wick. The flame ran around, bigger than the other two together. But still her arms hung there. I bit my lip. "By God, I will!" said I to myself, and I lit the fourth.

It was fierce, sir, fierce! And yet those arms never trembled. I had to look around at her. Her eyes were still looking into mine, so deep and deep, and her red lips were still smiling with that queer sleepy droop; the only thing was that tears were raining down her cheeks —big, glowing, round, jewel tears. It wasn't human, sir. It was like a dream.

"Pretty arms," she sighed, and then, as if those words had broken something in her heart, there came a great sob bursting from her lips. To hear it drove me mad. I reached to drag her away, but she was too quick, sir; she cringed from me and slipped out from between my hands. It was like she faded away, sir, and went down in a bundle, nursing her poor arms and mourning over them with those terrible, broken sobs.

The sound of them took the manhood out of me—you'd have been the same, sir. I knelt down beside her on the floor and covered my face.

"Please," I moaned. "Please! Please!" That's all I could say. I wanted her to forgive me. I reached out a hand, blind, for forgiveness, and I couldn't find her anywhere. I had hurt her so, and she was afraid of me, of *me*, sir, who loved her so deep it drove me crazy.

I could see her down the stair, though it was dim and my eyes were filled with tears. I stumbled after her, crying, "Please! Please!" The little wicks I'd lit were blowing in the wind from the door and smoking the glass beside them black. One went out. I pleaded with them, the same as I would plead with a human being. I said I'd be back in a second. I promised. And I went on down the stair, crying like a baby because I'd hurt her, and she was afraid of me—of *me*, sir.

She had gone into her room. The door was closed against me and I could hear her sobbing beyond it, broken-hearted. My heart was broken, too. I beat on the door with my palms. I begged her to forgive me. I told her I loved her. And all the answer was that sobbing in the dark.

And then I lifted the latch and went in, groping, pleading. "Dearest—please! Because I love you!"

I heard her speak down near the floor. There wasn't any anger in her voice; nothing but sadness and despair.

"No," said she. "You don't love me, Ray. You never have."

"I do! I have!"

"No, no," said she, as if she was tired out.

"Where are you?" I was groping for her. I thought, and lit a match. She had got to the door and was standing there as if ready to fly. I went toward her, and she made me stop. She took my breath away. "I hurt your arms," said I, in a dream.

"No," said she, hardly moving her lips. She held them out to the match's light for me to look, and there was never a scar on them—not even that soft, golden down was singed, sir. "You can't hurt my body," said she, sad as anything. "Only my heart, Ray; my poor heart."

I tell you again, she took my breath away. I lit another match. "How can you be so beautiful?" I wondered.

She answered in riddles—but oh, the sadness of her, sir.

"Because," said she, "I've always so wanted to be."

"How come your eyes so heavy?" said I.

"Because I've seen so many things I never dreamed of," said she.

"How come your hair so thick?"

"It's the seaweed makes it thick," said she, smiling queer, queer.

"How come seaweed there?"

"Out of the bottom of the sea."

She talked in riddles, but it was like poetry to hear her, or a song.

"How come your lips so red?" said I.

"Because they've wanted so long to be kissed."

Fire was on me, sir. I reached out to catch her, but she was gone, out of the door and down the stair. I followed, stumbling. I must have tripped on the turn, for I remember going through the air and fetching up with a crash, and I didn't know anything for a spell—how long I can't say. When I came to, she was there, somewhere, bending over me, crooning, "My love—my love—" under her breath, like a song.

But then when I got up, she was not where my arms went; she was down the stair again, just ahead of me. I followed her. I was tottering and dizzy and full of pain. I tried to catch up with her in the dark of the store-room, but she was too quick for me, sir, always a little too quick for me. Oh, she was cruel to me, sir. I kept bumping against things, hurting myself still worse, and it was cold and wet and a horrible noise all the while, sir; and then, sir, I found the door was open, and a sea had parted the hinges.

I don't know how it all went, sir. I'd tell you if I could, but it's all so blurred—sometimes it seems more like a dream. I couldn't find her any more; I couldn't hear her; I went all over, everywhere. Once, I remember, I found myself hanging out of that door between the davits, looking down into those big black seas and crying like a baby. It's all riddles and blur. I can't seem to tell you much, sir. It was all—all—I don't know.

I was talking to somebody else—not her. It was the Inspector. I hardly knew it was the Inspector. His face was as gray as a blanket, and his eyes were bloodshot, and his lips were twisted. His left wrist hung down, awkward. It was broken coming aboard the Light in that sea. Yes, we were in the living-room. Yes, sir, it was daylight—gray daylight. I tell you, sir, the man looked crazy to me. He was waving his good arm toward the weather windows, and what he was saying, over and over, was this:

"*Look what you done, damn you! Look what you done!*"

And what I was saying was this:

"*I've lost her!*"

I didn't pay any attention to him, nor him to me. By and by he did, though. He stopped his talking all of a sudden, and his eyes looked like the devil's eyes. He put them up close to mine. He grabbed my arm with his good hand, and I cried, I was so weak.

"Johnson," said he, "is that it? By the living God—if you got a woman out here, Johnson!"

"No," said I. "I've lost her."

"What do you mean—lost her?"

"It was dark," said I—and it's funny how my head was clearing up—"and the door was open—the store-room door—and I was after her—and I guess she stumbled, maybe—and I lost her."

"Johnson," said he, "what do you mean? You sound crazy—downright crazy. Who?"

"Her," said I. "Fedderson's wife."

"*Who?*"

"Her," said I. And with that he gave my arm another jerk.

"Listen," said he, like a tiger. "Don't try that on me. It won't do any good—that kind of lies—not where *you're* going to. Fedderson and his wife, too—the both of 'em's drowned deader 'n a door-nail."

"I know," said I, nodding my head. I was so calm it made him wild.

"You're crazy! Crazy as a loon, Johnson!" And he was chewing his lip red. "I know, because it was me that found the old man laying on Back Water Flats yesterday morning—*me!* And she'd been with him in the boat, too, because he had a piece of her jacket tore off, tangled in his arm."

"I know," said I, nodding again, like that.

"You know *what*, you *crazy, murdering fool?*" Those were his words to me, sir.

"I know," said I, "what I know."

"And *I* know," said he, "what *I* know."

And there you are, sir. He's Inspector. I'm—nobody."

Master of Fallen Years

By Vincent O'Sullivan

I

SEVERAL years ago, I was intimately acquainted with a young man named Augustus Barber. He was employed in a paper-box manufacturer's business in the city of London. I never heard what his father was. His mother was a widow and lived, I think, at Godalming; but of this I am not sure. It is odd enough that I should have forgotten where she lived, for my friend was always talking about her. Sometimes he seemed immensely fond of her; at other times almost to hate her; but whichever it was, he never left her long out of his conversation. I believe the reason I forget is that he talked so much about her that I failed at last to pay attention to what he said

He was a stocky young man, with light-coloured hair and a pale, rather blotchy complexion. There was nothing at all extraordinary about him on either the material or spiritual side. He had rather a weakness for gaudy ties and socks and jewelry. His manners were a little boisterous, his conversation altogether personal He had received some training at a commercial school. He read little else than the newspapers. The only book I ever knew him to read was a novel of Stevenson's, which he said was "too hot for blisters."

Where, then, in this very commonplace young man, were hidden the elements of the extraordinary actions and happenings I am about to relate? Various theories offer; it is hard to decide. Doctors, psychologists whom I have consulted, have given different opinions; but upon one point they have all agreed—that I am not able to supply enough information about his ancestry. And, in fact, I know hardly anything about that.

This is not, either, because he was uncommunicative. As I say, he used to talk a lot about his mother. But he did not really inspire enough interest for anybody to take an interest in his affairs. He was there; he was a pleasant enough fellow; but when he had gone you were finished with him till the next time. If he did not look you up, it would never occur to you to go and see him. And as to what became of him when he was out of sight, or how he lived—all that, somehow, never troubled our heads.

What illustrates this is that when he had a severe illness a few years after I came to know him, so little impression did it make on any one that I cannot now say, and nobody else seems able to remember, what the nature of the illness was. But I remember that he was very ill indeed; and one day, meeting one of his fellow-clerks in Cheapside, he told me that Barber's death was only a question of hours. But he recovered, after being, as I heard, for a long time in a state of lethargy which looked mortal.

It was when he was out again that I—and not only myself but others—noticed for the first time that his character was changing. He had always been a laughing, undecided sort of person; he had a facile laugh for everything; he would meet you and begin laughing before there was anything to laugh at. This was certainly harmless, and he had a de-

served reputation for good-humour.

But his manners now became subject to strange fluctuations which were very objectionable while they lasted. He would be overtaken with fits of sullenness in company; at times he was violent. He took to rambling in strange places at night, and more than once he appeared at his office in a very battered condition. It is difficult not to think that he provoked the rows he got into himself. One good thing was that the impulses which drove him to do such actions were violent rather than enduring; in fact, I often thought that if the force and emotion of these bouts ever came to last longer, he would be a very dangerous character. This was not only my opinion; it was the opinion of a number of respectable people who knew him as well as I did.

I recollect that one evening, as three or four of us were coming out of a music-hall, Barber offered some freedom to a lady which the gentleman with her—a member of Parliament, I was told—thought fit to resent. He turned fiercely on Barber with his hand raised—and then suddenly grew troubled, stepped back, lost countenance. This could not have been physical fear, for he was a strongly-built, handsome man—a giant compared to the insignificant Barber. But Barber was looking at him, and there was something not only in his face, but, so to speak, *encompassing* him—I can't well describe it—a sort of abstract right—an uncontrolled power—a command of the issues of life and death, which made one quail.

Everybody standing near felt it; I could see that from their looks. Only for a moment it lasted, and then the spell was broken—really as if some formidable spectacle had been swept away from before our eyes; and there was Barber, a most ordinary looking young man, quiet and respectable, and so dazed that he scarcely heeded the cuff which the gentleman managed to get in before we could drag our friend off. . .

It was about this time that he began to show occasionally the strangest interest in questions of art—I mean, strange in him whom we had never known interested in anything of the kind. I am told, however, that this is not so very remarkable, since not a few cases have been observed of men and women, after some shock or illness, developing hitherto unsuspected aptitude for painting or poetry or music. But in such cases the impulse lasts continuously for a year or two, and now and then for life.

With Barber the crisis was just momentary, never lasting more than half an hour, often much less. In the midst of his emphatic and pretentious talk, he would break off suddenly, remain for a minute lost and dreaming, and then, after spying at us suspiciously to see if we had noticed anything strange, he would give an undecided laugh and repeat a joke he had read in some comic paper.

His talk on these art subjects was without sense or connection, so far as I could discover. Sometimes he spoke of painting, but when we put to him the names of famous painters, he had never heard of them, and I don't believe he had ever been in an art-gallery in his life. More often he spoke of theatrical matters. Coming back from a theater, he would sometimes fall to abusing the actors, and show the strongest jealousy, pointing out how the parts should have been played, and claiming roundly that he could have played them better. Of course, there were other times—most times—when he was alike indifferent to plays and players, or summed them up like the rest of us, as just "ripping" or "rotten." It was only when the play had much excited him that he became critical, and at such times none of us seemed willing to dispute with him, though we hardly ever agreed with what he was saying

Sometimes, too, he would talk of

his travels, telling obvious lies, for we all knew well enough that he had never been outside the home-counties, except once on a week-end trip to Boulogne-sur-mer. On one occasion he put me to some confusion and annoyed me considerably before a gentleman whom I had thoughtlessly brought him with me to visit. This gentleman had long resided in Rome as agent for an English hosiery firm, and he and his wife were kindly showing us some photographs, picture-postcards, and the like, when, at the sight of a certain view, Barber bent over the picture and became absorbed.

"I have been there," he said.

The others looked at him with polite curiosity and a little wonder. To pass it off I began to mock.

"No," he persisted, "I have seen it."

"Yes, at the moving-pictures."

But he began to talk rapidly and explain. I could see that the gentleman and his wife were interested and quite puzzled. It would seem that the place he described—Naples, I think it was—resembled broadly the place they knew, but with so many differences of detail as to be almost unrecognizable. It was, as Mrs. W. said afterward, "like a city perceived in a dream—all the topsy-turvydom, all the mingling of fantasty and reality"....

After outbursts of this kind, he was generally ill—at least he kept his bed and slept much. As a consequence, he was often away from the office; and whenever I thought of him in those days, I used to wonder how he managed to keep his employment.

II

One foggy evening in January, about eight o'clock, I happened to be walking with Barber in the West End. We passed before a concert-hall, brilliantly lighted, with a great crowd of people gathered about the doors, and I read on a poster that a concert of classical music was forward at which certain renowned artists were to appear. I really cannot give any sort of reason why I took it into my head to go in. I am rather fond of music, even of the kind which requires a distinct intellectual effort; but I was not anxious to hear music that night, and in any case, Barber was about the last man in the world I should have chosen to hear it with. When I proposed that we should take tickets, he strongly objected.

"Just look me over," he said. "I ain't done anything to you that you want to take my life, have I? I know the kind of merry-go-round that goes on in there, and I'm not having any."

I suppose it was his opposition which made me stick to the project, for I could not genuinely have cared very much, and there was nothing to be gained by dragging Barber to a concert against his will. Finally, seeing I was determined, he yielded, though most ungraciously

"It'll be the chance of a life-time for an hour's nap," he said as we took our seats, "if they only keep the trombone quiet."

I repeat his trivial sayings to show how little there was about him in manner or speech to prepare me for what followed

I remember that the first number on the programme was Beethoven's Seventh Symphony. This work, as is well known, is rather long, and so, at the end of the third movement, I turned and looked at Barber to see if he was asleep. But his eyes were wide open, feverish, almost glaring; he was twining and untwining his fingers and muttering excitedly Throughout the fourth movement he continued to talk incoherently

"Shut up!" I whispered fiercely. "Just see if you can't keep quiet, or we shall be put out"

I was indeed very much annoyed, and some people nearby were turning in their chairs and frowning. . .

I do not know whether he heard what I said: I had no chance to talk to him. The applause had hardly died away at the end of the symphony when a singer appeared on the stage. Who he was, or what music he sang, I am utterly unable to say; but if he is still alive it is impossible that he should have forgotten what I relate. If I do not remember him, it is because all else is swallowed up for me in that extraordinary event.

Scarcely had the orchestra ceased preluding and the singer brought out the first notes of his song, than Barber slowly rose from his seat.

"That man is not an artist," he said in a loud and perfectly final voice. "I will sing myself."

"Sit down, for God's sake! . . . The management . . . the police." . . .

Some words like these I gasped, foreseeing the terrible scandal which would ensue, and I caught him by the arm. But he shook himself free without any difficulty, without even a glance at me, and walked up the aisle and across the front of the house toward the little stairs at the side which led up to the platform. By this time the entire audience was aware that something untoward was happening. There were a few cries of "Sit down! Put him out!" An usher hastened up as Barber was about to mount the steps.

Then a strange thing happened.

As the usher drew near, crying out angrily, I saw Barber turn and look at him. It was not, as I remember, a fixed look or a determined look; it was the kind of untroubled careless glance a man might cast over his shoulder who heard a dog bark. I saw the usher pause, grow pale and shamefaced feel like a servant who has made a mistake; he made a profound bow and then—yes, he actually dropped on his knees. All the people saw that. They saw Barber mount the platform, the musicians cease, the singer and the conductor give way before him. But never a word was said—there was a perfect hush. And yet, so far as my stunned senses would allow me to perceive, the people were not wrathful or even curious; they were just silent and collected as people generally are at some solemn ceremonial. Nobody but me seemed to realize the outrageousness and monstrosity of the vulgar-looking, insignificant Barber there on the platform, holding up the show, stopping the excellent music we had all paid to hear.

And in truth I myself was rapidly falling into the strangest confusion. For a certain time—I cannot quite say how long—I lost my hold on realities. The London concert-hall, with its staid, rather sad-looking audience, vanished, and I was in a great white place inundated with sun—some vast luminous scene. Under a wide caressing blue sky, in the dry and limpid atmosphere, the white marble of the buildings and the white-clad people appeared as against a background of an immense blue veil shot with silver. It was the hour just before twilight, that rapid hour when the colours of the air have a supreme brilliance and serenity, and a whole people, impelled by some indisputable social obligation, seemed to be reverently witnessing the performance of one magnificent man of uncontrollable power, of high and solitary grandeur. . .

Barber began to sing

Of what he sang I can give no account. The words seemed to me here and there to be Greek, but I do not know Greek well, and in such words as I thought I recognized, his pronunciation was so different from what I had been taught that I may well have been mistaken.

I was so muddled, and, as it were, transported, that I cannot say even if he sang well. Criticism did not occur to me; he was there singing and we were bound to listen. As I try to hear it, now, it was a carefully trained voice. A sound of harps seemed to accompany the singing;

perhaps the harpists in the orchestra touched their instruments. . . .

How long did it last? I have no idea. But it did not appear long before all began to waver. The spell began to break; the power by which he was compelling us to listen to him was giving out. It was exactly as if something, a mantle or the like, was falling from Barber.

The absurdity of the whole thing began to dawn on me. There was Barber, an obscure little Londoner, daring to interrupt a great musical performance so that the audience might listen to him instead! Probably because I was the only one on the spot personally acquainted with Barber, I was perceiving the trick put upon us sooner than the rest of the audience; but they too were becoming a little restless, and it would not be long ere they fully awoke. One thing I saw with perfect clearness and some terror, and that was that Barber himself realized that his power was dying within him. He appeared to be dwindling, shrinking down; in his eyes were suffering and a terrible panic—the distress of a beaten man appealing for mercy. The catastrophe must fall in a minute. . . .

With some difficulty I rose from my place and made for the nearest exit. My difficulty came, not from the crowd or anything like that, but from an inexplicable sensation that I was committing some crime by stirring while Barber was on the stage, and even risking my life

Outside it was raining

I walked away rapidly, for although I was, to a certain extent, under the influence of the impression I have just described, some remains of common-sense urged me to put a long distance between myself and the concert-hall as soon as possible. I knew that the hoots and yells of fury and derision had already broken loose back there. Perhaps Barber would be taken to the police-station. I did not want to be mixed up in the affair. . . .

But suddenly I heard the steps of one running behind me. As I say, it was a wet night, and at that hour the street was pretty empty. Barber ran up against me and caught my arm. He was panting and trembling violently.

"You fool!" I cried furiously. "Oh, you fool!" I shook myself free of his hold. "How did you get out?"

"I don't know," he panted. "They let me go . . . that is, as soon as I saw that I was standing up there before them all, I jumped off the stage and bolted. Whatever made me do it? My God, what made me do it? I heard a shout. I think they are after me."

I hailed a passing cab and shoved Barber inside, and then got in myself. I gave the cabman a fictitious address in Kensington.

"Yes," I said fiercely. "What made you do it?"

He was bunched in a corner of the cab, shuddering like a man who has just had some great shock, or who has been acting under the influence of a drug which has evaporated and left him helpless. His words came in gasps.

"If you can tell me that!—God, I'm frightened! I'm frightened! I must be crazy. Whatever made me do it? If they hear of it at the office I'll lose my job."

"They'll hear of it right enough, my boy," I sneered, "and a good many other people too. You can't do these little games with impunity."

I caught sight of the clock at Hyde Park corner. It was near a quarter to ten.

"Why," I said, "you must have been up there over twenty minutes. Think of that!"

"Don't be so hard on me," said Barber miserably. "I couldn't help it."

And he added in a low voice: "It was the *Other*."

I paid off the cab, and we took a 'bus which passed by the street where Barber lived. All the way I continued to reproach him. It was not enough for him to play the fool on his own account, but he must get me into a mess too. I might lose my work through him

I walked with him to his door. He looked extremely ill. His hand trembled so badly that he could not fit his latch-key. I opened the door for him.

"Come up and sit with a fellow," he ventured.

"Why?"

"I'm frightened. . . ."

"I believe," I said roughly, "that you've been drinking—or drugging."

I shoved him inside the house, pulled the door closed, and walked away down the street. I was very angry and disturbed, but I felt also the need to treat Barber with contempt so as to keep myself alive to the fact that he was really a mere nothing, a little scum on the surface of London, of no more importance than a piece of paper on the pavement. For—shall I confess it?—I was even yet so much under the emotion of the scene back there in the concert-hall that I could not help regarding him still with some mixture of respect and—yes, absurd as it may sound, of fear.

III

It was nearly a year before I saw Barber again. I heard that he had lost his place at his office. The cashier there, who told me this, said that although the young man was generally docile and a fair worker, he had in the last year become very irregular, and was often quarrelsome and impudent. He added that Barber could now and then influence the management—"when he was not himself," as the cashier put it—or they would not have tolerated him so long.

"But this was only momentary," said the cashier. "He was more often weak and feeble, and they took a good opportunity to get rid of him. He was uncanny," ended the cashier significantly.

I cannot imagine how Barber existed after he lost his place. Perhaps his mother was able to help a little. On the day I met him, by mere chance in the street, he looked sick and miserable; his sallow face was more blotchy than ever. Whether he saw me or not I don't know, but he was certainly making as if to go by when I stopped him. I told him he looked weak and unwell.

"Trust you to pass a cheery remark!" And he continued irritably:

"How can you expect a chap to look well if he has something inside him stronger than himself forcing him to do the silliest things? It must wear him out. I never know when it will take me next. I'm here in London looking for a job to-day, but even if I find one, I'm sure to do some tomfool thing that will get me the sack."

He passed his hand across his face. "I'd rather not think about it."

I took pity on him, he looked so harassed, and I asked him to come on to a Lyons restaurant with me and have a bit of lunch. As we walked through the streets, we fell in with a great crowd, and then I remembered that some royal visitors were to proceed in great state to the Mansion House. I proposed to Barber that we should go and look at the procession, and he agreed more readily than I expected.

In fact, after a while, the crowd, and the rumour, and the stirring of troops as they fell into position, evidently wrought on him to a remarkable degree. He began to talk loud and rather haughtily, to study his gestures; there was infinite superiority and disdain in the looks he cast on the people. He attracted the attention and, I thought, the derision of those close to us, and I became

rather ashamed and impatient of those ridiculous airs. Yet I could not help feeling sorry for him. The poor creature evidently suffered from megalomania—that was the only way to account for his pretentious notions of his own importance, seeing that he was just a needy little clerk out of work. . . .

The place from which we were watching the procession was a corner of Piccadilly Circus. The street lay before our eyes bleached in the sun, wide and empty, looking about three times as large as usual, bordered with a line of soldiers and mounted police, and the black crowd massed behind. In a few minutes the procession of princes would sweep by. There was a hush over all the people.

What followed happened so quickly that I can hardly separate the progressive steps. Barber continued to talk excitedly, but all my attention being on the scene before me, I took no heed of what he said. Neither could I hear him very plainly. But it must have been the ceasing of his voice which made me look around, when I saw he was no longer by my side.

How he managed, at that moment, to get out there I never knew, but suddenly in the broad vacant space, fringed by police and soldiery, I saw Barber walking alone in the sight of all the people.

I was thunderstruck. What a madman! I expected to hear the crowd roar at him, to see the police ride up and drag him away.

But nobody moved; there was a great stillness; and before I knew it my own feelings blended with the crowd's. It seemed to me that Barber was in his right place there: this mean shabby man, walking solitary, was what we had all come to see. For his passage the street had been cleared, the guards deployed, the houses decked.

It all sounds wild, I know, but the whole scene made so deep an impression on my mind that I am perfectly certain as to what I felt while Barber was walking there. He walked slowly, with no trace of his usual shuffling uncertain gait, but with a balanced cadenced step, and as he turned his head calmly from side to side his face seemed transfigured. It was the face of a genius, an evil genius, unjust and ruthless—a brutal god. I felt, and no doubt everyone in the crowd felt, that between us and that lonely man there was some immense difference and distance of outlook and will and desire.

I could follow his progress for several yards. Then I lost sight of him. Almost immediately afterward I heard a tumult—shouts and uproar—

Then the royal procession swept by.

IV

I said to Mr. G. M., "Whether he was arrested that day, or knocked down by the cavalry and taken to a hospital, I don't know. I have not seen or heard of him till I got that letter on Wednesday."

Mr. G. M., who is now one of the managers of a well-known tobacconist firm, had been in the same office as Barber, and notwithstanding the disparity of age and position, had always shown a kindly interest in him and befriended him when he could Accordingly, when I received a letter from Barber begging in very lamentable terms to visit him at an address in Kent, I thought it prudent to consult this gentleman before sending any reply. He proposed very amiably that we should meet at Charing Cross Station on the following Saturday afternoon and travel in to Kent together. In the train we discussed Barber's case. I related all I knew of the young man and we compared our observations.

"Certainly," said Mr. G. M., "what you tell me is rather astonishing. But the explanation is simple

as far as poor Barber is concerned. You say he has been often ill lately? Naturally, this has affected his brain and spirits. What is a little more difficult to explain is the impression left by his acts on you and other spectators. But the anger you always experienced may have clouded your faculties for the time being. Have you inquired of anybody else who was present on these occasions?"

I replied that I had not. I had shrunk from being identified in any way with Barber. I had to think of my wife and children. I could not afford to lose my post.

"No," rejoined Mr. G. M., "I can quite understand that. I should probably have acted myself as you did. Still, the effect his performances have had on you, and apparently on others, is the strangest element in Barber's case. Otherwise, I don't see that it offers anything inexplicable. You say that Barber acts against his will—against his better judgment. We all do that. All men and women who look back over their lives must perceive the number of things they have done which they had no intention of doing. We obey some secret command; we sail under sealed orders. We pass by without noticing it some tiny fact which, years later, perhaps, influences the rest of our lives. And for all our thinking, we seldom can trace this tiny fact. I myself cannot tell to this day why I did not become a Baptist minister. It seems to me I always intended to do this, but one fine afternoon I found I had ended my first day's work in a house of business.

"Much of our life is unconscious; even the most wide-awake of us pass much of our lives in dreams. Several hours out of every twenty-four we pass in a dream state; we cannot help carrying some of those happy or sinister adventures into our waking hours. It is really as much our habit to dream as to be awake. Perhaps we are always dreaming. Haven't you ever for a moment, under some powerful exterior shock, become half-conscious that you should be doing something else from what you are actually doing? But with us this does not last; and as life goes on such intimations become dimmer and dimmer. With subjects like Barber, on the other hand, the intimations become stronger and stronger, till at last they attempt to carry their dreams into action. That is the way I explain this case."

"Perhaps you are right."

V

The house where Barber was lodging stood high up on the side of a hill. We reached it after a rather breathless climb in the rain. It was a shepherd's cottage, standing quite lonely. Far down below the village could be seen with the smoke above the red roofs.

The woman told us that Barber was in, but she thought he might be asleep. He slept a lot.

"I don't know how he lives," she said. "He pays us scarce anything. We can't keep him much longer."

He was fast asleep, lying back in a chair with his mouth half-open, wrapped in a shabby overcoat. He looked very mean; and when he awoke it was only one long wail on his hard luck. He couldn't get any work. People had a prejudice against him; they looked at him askance. He had a great desire for sleep—couldn't somehow keep awake.

"If I could tell you the dreams I have!" he cried fretfully. "Silliest rotten stuff. I try to tell 'em to the woman here or her husband sometimes, but they won't listen. Shouldn't be surprised if they think I'm a bit off. They say I'm always talking to myself. I'm sure I'm not. . . . I wish I could get out of here. Can't you get me a job?" he asked, turning to Mr. G. M.

"Well, Gus, I'll see. I'll do my best."

"Lummy!" exclaimed Barber excitedly, "you ought to see the things I dream. I can't think where the bloomin' pictures come from. And yet I've seen it all before. I know all those faces. They are not all white. Some are brown like Egyptians, and some are quite black. I've seen them somewhere. Those long terraces and statues and fountains and marble courts, and the blue sky and the sun, and those dancing girls with the nails of their hands and feet stained red, and the boy in whose hair I wipe my fingers, and the slave I struck dead last night—"

His eyes were delirious, terrible to see.

"Ah," he cried hoarsely, "I am stifling here. Let us go into the air."

And indeed he was changing so much—not essentially in his person, though his face had become broader, intolerant, domineering and cruel—but there was pouring from him so great an emanation of power that it seemed to crack and break down the poor little room. Mr. G. M. and myself had no desire to thwart him, and it never occurred to us to do so. We should as soon have thought of stopping a thunderstorm. We followed him outside on to the space of level ground before the house and listened humbly while he spoke.

As well as I can recollect, he was lamenting some hindrance to his impulses, some flaw in his power "To have the instincts of the ruler and no slaves to carry out my will. To wish to reward and punish and to be deprived of the means. To be the master of the world, but only in my own breast—Oh, fury! The plough-boy there is happy, for he has no longings outside of his simple round life. While I—if I had the earth in my hand, I should want a star. Misery! Misery!"

He leaned upon a low stone wall and looked down on the town, over the pastures blurred with rain.

"And those wretches down there," he pronounced slowly, "who jeer at me when I pass and insult me with impunity, whose heads should be struck off, and I cannot strike them off! I loathe that town. How ugly it is! It offends my eyes."

He turned and looked us full in the face and our hearts became as water.

"Burn it," he said.

Then he turned away again and bowed his head in his arms on the wall.

VI

I don't remember anything clearly till a long time afterward, when I found myself walking with Mr. G. M. in the wet night on a deserted road on the outskirts of the town. We were carrying some inflammable things, flax, tar, matches, etc., which we must have purchased.

Mr. G. M. stopped and looked at me. It was exactly like coming out of a fainting fit.

"What are we doing with this gear?" he said in a low voice.

"I don't know.'

"Better chuck it over a hedge. . ."

We made our way to the station in silence. I was thinking of that desolate figure up there on the hill, leaning over the wall in the dark and the rain

We caught the last train to London. In the carriage Mr. G. M began to shiver as though he were cold.

"Brrr! that fellow got on my nerves," he said; and we made no further allusion to the matter.

But as the train, moving slowly, passed a gap which brought us again in sight of the town, we saw a tongue of flame stream into the sky.

THE IMMORTAL CURSE

By J. H. ROSNY AINE

(From *Revue Bleue*)

I

"WHAT a strange country this is," thought Frederick Maldar as he strode along the Marais des Escalaves in the fading twilight.

A livid mist rose from the water among the beds of seaweed. The old marsh had the same appearance as when the men of antiquity had christened it. One felt the presence of slimy, sticky, living objects, buried in the mud. An existence given up to battles between the devouring and the devoured. . . .

"In the age when Suffren led his victorious fleets against the masters of the sea, my great-great-grandmother was living here. There were six brothers, one of whom fought in America—— Why have we not come back for two generations? Am I about to renew a tradition?" he mused.

As Maldar walked along, he felt again the burden of a strange unrest which seemed to take possession of him every evening when darkness fell. This evening he was particularly troubled. Two or three times he thought he saw someone following him, and he looked backward fearfully, recalling that in this very locality a gang of outlaws had for six months been terrifying the country. The memory oppressed him. Aside from that there was no other country more lovely, more fitted for the wooing of the melancholy evening, which Maldar so mysteriously loved. But more awesome than this sense of someone following him were the sickly fears of his own mind. To escape these morbid notions he determinedly fixed his mind on other things, and, pushing aside the branches of a tree, he gazed, with apparent calm, upon the deserted site of an old forge, where according to ancient myth, the gods had hammered violet metals into iron mountains. It was truly an old forge

of the Cabires, dug up by a storm, which the darkness had engulfed in its devouring blackness.

He pondered over the old myths. A myth, was it? No more so than the swamp itself,—no more than Frederick Maldar. It lasted an hour, Maldar several decades, the swamp several thousand years,—and all three only a second in eternal time. The marsh had been there always, when the light was no more than phosphorus lost in a shadowy sea: Suddenly a threatening odor arose from the borders of the thick forest. Maldar fancied he heard Altair, Wega, Capella, chanting ancient litanies. From time to time, a flame of fire arose in the same illusory forms in which it had played, despite all changes in the world, in the time of the Chaldean shepherds, the prophets of Egypt and the Sophists of Greece.

A shiver passed over Maldar. With no possibility of mistake, in spite of the shadows, he had just sighted the outline of a man jutting up between two rocks, as if in wait for him. Watching intently Maldar saw a man of middling height who appeared to be crouching there. As he continued to walk, he saw the man change his position once—twice—three times.

Maldar felt for his revolver in the inside pocket of his trousers, all the time advancing toward the figure behind the rocks. As he came within five or six feet the mysterious form vanished. Mystified, Maldar pushed forward. Beyond the hollow he saw only the earth with scrubby bushes extending to the swamp, behind which the woods began again. When the hallucination had passed, so horrible that it had made his hair stand on end, Maldar still had a presentiment of danger.

All light had vanished except the flickering gleams of the stars in the black swamp. Twenty feet away the form of a willow could not be distinguished from the form of a man, yet Maldar was certain that the *other* stalked after him. After what seemed unbreaking darkness, a light at last pierced the night. Maldar had come to the bridge; beyond were three lighted windows. A dog barked joyfully; a servant appeared on the porch; a sense of relief overcame Maldar.

II

"The twilight was impressive," remarked Cecile Maldar, dipping her spoon into the soup. The brother and sister resembled each other in all but coloring; the man's hair was blond, and the woman's dark; but the eyes were the same, jade color, almond shape, with dark, dilating pupils.

"Yes," answered Maldar, "impressive—oh, very impressive!"

In the lighted room, near this girl of Gallic type, whom he had known since childhood and who recalled so many incidents of his everyday life, he forgot his terror, and the pleasant odor of the soup drove away his phantasies. Being a healthy person, he loved this dinner which reminded him of so many others, delicious, long drawn out and reposeful. He devoured greedily a well-seasoned, tender little pike.

"No danger in eating this river tiger," laughed Maldar.

"And the trout is a panther——"

"It's curious that carnivorous fish are good to eat,—while felines——"

The quince tart was delicious, with a cigarette and a small but very strong cup of coffee Maldar felt his happiness complete. He was one of those people who live for the moment, and since Cecile never troubled herself with the thought of hard times, they enjoyed life fully. . . .

After dinner, while Cecile busied herself with the details of housekeeping, Maldar sauntered to the library. Among the books there were old and new; he fingered one of the time of Franklin, and then selected two of the twentieth century. Choosing "The Travels of Captain Cook," and a novel called "Gaspard of the Mountains," he settled himself to read, but curiously found himself opening neither one nor the other.

The mood of the twilight was returning, a feeling of terror seized Maldar by the throat, and at the same time a sense of irritation. For a moment he seemed to struggle savagely with himself, loosening within an inexplicable hatred. Maldar detested Maldar!

This was not the first time he had felt himself the victim of his own inner conflicts, but he had never experienced the

struggle so intensely. He was amazed at the force of this inner battle.

But in a short time it was over. Maldar, looking around him, saw with pleasure the familiar room, secured against the outside world by iron bars across the windows.

In a calmer mood, he picked up "Gaspard of the Mountains" and was soon carried off to the Auvergne country. Occasionally he paused in his reading to visualize the characters, the places and the circumstances—then he resumed, with a little thrill of pleasure. . . . After an hour, however, he abandoned Gaspard, and, taking up the second book, began to follow Captain Cook in his amazing explorations.

It was not the first time: in his youth he had felt a loyal friendship for this adventurous rover. He had followed him far on his voyages. First on the good ship *Endeavor* across the Pacific to New Zealand and New Guinea, and back by way of the Indian Ocean: later on the *Revolution* and the *Adventure* again across the great Pacific to Tahiti, Australia, the Pacific Isles, the Hebrides . . . coming back through Antarctic waters, his brave spirit dreamed, no doubt, of turning toward the Pole.

Tonight Maldar and the sea-king sailed to the Sandwich Islands, Alaska, and the icy Arctic. But the end was approaching. Returning to the Sandwich Islands, the undaunted man who had faced death in a hundred different ways before, was murdered by the savage natives.

"Marvellous explorations!" mused Maldar. "What a contribution to knowledge! What an enormous task for the poor sailors who took their lives in their hands! And what virgin poetry surrounded them, if they had had imagination enough to appreciate it!"

Closing the book, he looked at Cecile, who was reading a history of witchcraft.

"It's unbelievable," she said, "how men have suffered through one another."

"They will always suffer, my dear! Think what frightful tortures millions and millions of men endured in the war! Burned alive with scalding oils . . . screaming with agony on the bare ground! And in the Orient torture isn't even yet absolutely abolished . . ."

"How horrid!" she cried, throwing down the book, "I'll console myself with Gerald d'Houville in the enchanted forest."

She buried herself in her romance, while Maldar, who had read enough, sat pondering over the mysteries of this room, where for three generations books, pictures and engravings had been accumulating. He strolled to the open window. Between the iron gratings he could see a meadow, like a glassy lake in the moonlight. A brook was babbling fainter than the sough of the willows on its bank. Maldar felt his unrest returning; it preyed upon him like a dark beast prowling in the forest.

"Why is there no peace in man?" he cried impatiently. "On such a night as this it is absurd to be feeling presentiments. My mind ought to be as perfectly contented as my body."

He began to walk. Walking was his cure for all ills. He went out of the library, through the dining-room, into the garden in the starlight.

The postern gate was open. He heard the low, consoling murmur of the brook; between the red birches, and the oaks with outstretched branches, he could see the orange half-moon descending. There was a fresh smell in the foliage, stirred by a gentle breeze. In the distance, a steep, jagged hill was outlined against the sky, presenting the same silhouette it had offered to watchers in the Middle Ages, or Gallic huntsmen riding through the night.

"How old it is—and how young!" he said, his gaze fixed on the intoxicating stars.

He strolled under the arching branches as far as the mossy footbridge, while a great violet cloud was rising in the west, and hiding the moon. The cloud was growing heavier, vaguely lighted by the stars, and Maldar, a little tired, stopped to rest. A rustling noise made him turn his head; he saw beside the brook, half hidden by the willows, a human silhouette.

Anguish seized him once more, and he cried out in a raucous voice: "Who's there?"

The shadow retreated and was half hidden by the willows.

Maldar saw, with horror—the same ghostly form!

Back in the house once more, with the door securely locked, in the lamplight and familiarity of home, he began to reflect. Fear lurked in him like a beast in the night. Was he in the presence of some strange reality, or was he prey to an hallucination? Both ideas were disagreeable, but he preferred the first. He had a great horror of nervous disorders.

After half an hour of conjecture he tried to take up "Gaspard of the Mountains," but his attention wandered and was lost. He soon abandoned the book and started to walk up and down again.

"What is the matter with you?" asked Cecile, disturbed by his gloomy looks.

He tried to smile.

"Nothing precisely—it's too absurd to even try to explain——"

Her first thought was of some bad news,—but the mail had arrived that morning, and had not seemed to worry Frederick, and he had no relations or intimate friends in this country.

"Don't you feel well?"

"Yes, perfectly. Don't worry, my dear. It's nothing—I tell you—an idea—nothing more."

Maldar's voice was hoarse and troubled. Cecile regarded her brother uneasily, but he seemed calmer, and he really was calm, except for a confused, half-conscious dread.

He picked up "Gaspard of the Mountains" again, wondering whether he had been influenced by the story, which was somewhat ghostly. But he had read thrilling stories a hundred times before without feeling nervous, much less having hallucinations. Besides out there by the swamp when the first *one* had appeared, his imagination had not been haunted by reading.

III

He expected to have difficulty in sleeping, but he dozed off the moment his head touched the pillow. He slept heavily, without dreams and without terror. About an hour before dawn he awoke suddenly.

He had left a large window open, as was his custom in

summer. Through the grilling he perceived the vague outline of a familiar tree, the bright embroidery of the stars on the violet velvet of night.

His heart was beating furiously, his whole body was shaking, he felt conscious of the presence of another human being. Rising up in bed he noticed confusedly the chairs, a table, the porcelain stove, the bureau and the glossy pallor of the mirrored wardrobe.

"Nothing!" he whispered to reassure himself.

His anguish persisted, and all at once he was positive that he saw on the threshold of his dressing-room the silhouette of a man. With a trembling hand he switched on the light. Nothing was there but the furniture. In the awful silence of the night he could hear the brook lapping and gurgling on the other side of the house.

For a moment only he hesitated. Then he picked up his revolver and got out of bed.

He had not been dreaming: the outer door of the dressing-room was open. He was sure he had double-locked it, as was his custom, on retiring. Then someone had entered. But where, and how? All the windows were secured with iron grillings, and the door had not been forced.

"Either it is someone who sneaked into the room before I went to sleep, or I am subject to hallucinations—and am sleep-walking in the bargain," Maldar told himself in a shaky voice.

He examined the windows, the bars were untouched. Both the dressing-room door, and that of the bedroom which led onto the stairway were closed.

"I'll look, just the same," thought Maldar.

He was shivering, his spine was frozen with fear; he had to make an enormous effort to get out to the landing, after he had turned on the electricity in the corridor.

Revolver in hand, he slowly descended, turning this way and that. Suddenly the electric light went out. Something grazed his shoulder. He felt a sharp thrust between his shoulders—he reeled, fell down the steps, and fainted. . . .

He remained there for some time. Cecile, whose sleep was deep and undisturbed, had heard nothing. When he regained consciousness it took him several minutes to recall

that he was lying on the floor. His memory was wavering; as it gradually became clearer, he remembered by degrees that he had been hit. Frightened and weak he got up and went groping for the nearest electric button. The light went on, and revealed only the hall, the entrance door, and the doors to the kitchen and dining-room.

"What does it mean? What does it mean?" Maldar was repeating to himself.

He felt only a slight pain in his back. He might have believed it was only imagination had he not seen a knife on the stairs. Putting his hand on his back he noticed that it was red with blood.

Evidently he had been hit from behind with this bloody knife. But his assailant had not returned to the attack. What did he want? Was he a thief, an enemy, or a fool?

Mechanically Maldar entered the dining-room where he turned on the light, then he went to the kitchen, then the library. He found the outer doors and the shutters all locked and bolted. It seemed probable, then, that the nightly visitor had either come in during the day and hidden himself, or had entered by a second-story window or the roof.

This ascertained, Maldar was astonished at his sangfroid. He felt curiously reassured, he was convinced that his wound was light, and that danger was no longer threatening him. In this state of mind he ascended the stairs. There was no trace of an intruder, neither on the second floor, nor in the huge attic, which had no means of communication with the out-of-doors except through two dormer windows solidly grilled, and secured by some ingenious steel apparatus.

"It is certain," he concluded, "that nobody has entered this house since it was locked."

To be doubly certain he gently tried to open the doors leading into Cecile's and the servants' rooms. They were locked. The women had bolted them as usual. Only one possibility was left. The thief, if he was a thief, had been in the house when the servants had closed it for the night.

"Then," it flashed upon him suddenly, "he must still be here!"

A cold, clammy terror rushed over him. He was on the point of calling Cecile. But first he examined his wound by the aid of a double mirror. It was not very deep, and seemed to be the result of a light, sure thrust. He felt so comforted that, after he had washed out his cut as well as he could, he was about to go back to bed. Still he decided that if the man were in the house, Cecile and even the servants ought to be warned. He made up his mind to wake her. . . .

His story alarmed and stunned her, but she did not lose her natural courage.

"We must go over the house once more, from top to bottom," she said.

To make more certain, she lighted the chandeliers. Frederick took up his Browning, and together they went downstairs. As Maldar had already determined, all the doors leading onto the street or the garden were doubly fastened with locks and bolts. The shutters also were closed, and had evidently admitted no one. On the stairway, except for the door into the corridor, everything was in order. Undoubtedly someone might have entered by the window which Maldar had left open for the night, except that its gratings were so close together that even a child of seven could scarcely have squeezed through them.

"It was no child that I saw—it was a man—almost my height——" said Maldar.

Cecile went to wake the servants. So as not to frighten them she spoke only of some suspicious noises. But the visit to their rooms threw no further light on the mystery. . . .

"If your back wasn't hurt, I should be inclined to think you were dreaming," said Cecile, when they were alone again.

"Perhaps then I was only sleep-walking," he replied.

Cecile examined his wound. It was a trifling cut between the shoulder blades and appeared to be a sidewise thrust.

"What ruins that last hypothesis," continued Maldar, "is the fact that in an attack of sleep-walking, I should have had to stab myself . . ."

He showed her the knife left by the aggressor.

They did not go back to bed until they had exhausted all possible solutions. . . .

In the morning they notified the doctor, the mayor and the police at Favigues, a town near the Maldars' estate. The police discovered nothing, and went away vaguely suspicious. The doctor, a wise old practitioner, examined the wound, looked at the knife, and concluded:

"A very feeble blow! Either from a coward or a child . . ."

He listened to all the details of the attack, which seemed to interest him tremendously, and finally said:

"This positively seems like an event from the other world, the world which in the nineteenth century was called the 'Beyond.' If you are not mistaken, if you have carefully verified all the facts, then only a ghost could have entered your house."

"Do you believe in ghosts, Doctor?"

"I don't know. When I said 'ghost' I used a poor word, —better say 'spirit'."

"You have made a study of the occult?"

"Yes, but a very slight one. The books on the science of the occult are so numerous and of such varied character! I have read only a few of the more celebrated volumes."

"I have always felt a repugnance for the supernatural, but it has fascinated me."

"We know nothing, nothing—or at best we know scarcely more than this fly here on my hand, who is evidently ignorant of the fact that he is at the mercy of a being as formidable to him as a giant the size of a mountain would be to us. It does not know, we do not know. The day when the workings of the 'Beyond' are clearly revealed to us, perhaps they will seem no more surprising than the workings of our bodies, where thousands of nerve centers coördinate the impressions of the external world. Personally I am practically certain that invisible beings are moving all around us. The universe seems more logical and coherent to me so, than if I believed that space was void of energy and life."

"We have no other proof than the proof of experience," contested Maldar.

"That is plain common sense. But in your case the interpretation of the experience seems to present several difficulties. However, with the police on one hand, and your own investigations on the other—— Would you mind if I tried several psychic tests?"

"Anything at all," said Maldar, smiling.

A minute afterward he was disgusted, for the doctor was already asking him a number of delicate, personal questions. Then he resumed.

"Just the same, it is unnatural. You have no enemies, and nothing here has been stolen. I would suspect a fit of hypnosis—but it is impossible that the cut between your shoulders and the manner in which it was inflicted should be your own work."

"Indeed, no!" exclaimed Maldar indignantly. "I have always been quite normal."

"Yes,—undoubtedly," acquiesced the doctor. But he was skeptical on this point, being inclined to believe that the human engine was very easily derailed. "However, even if you were not normal, I do not see how, in the present case, you could have interfered. That much is clear. We might then suppose that it was done by a madman. But in that case his appearance and disappearance present the same difficulties as if we suppose a criminal . . ."

The doctor thoughtfully studied his thumb-nail. He belonged to a hairy species of mankind. Two tufts, like hanks of wool, jutted out from his ears, his beard was extraordinarily plentiful, his hands covered with a reddish hair which probably grew heavily over his whole body. His yellow-green eyes glowed under his heavy eyebrows.

He took out his watch, saying:

"The wound is not at all serious; you do not need me—I will return at any rate if you will allow me—but not as a doctor."

As the doctor had predicted the wound healed rapidly, and Maldar spent several weeks in perfect peace. The judicial inquest, conducted by subordinates, had revealed nothing; the doctor clung to his first conclusion. . . .

Nevertheless some nervous disorder persisted in Maldar. Especially in the evening he had little fits of terror which

attacked him whenever he was alone in his bedroom. But habit is everything, and in about fifteen days he had practically recovered. The event remained a mystery, but gradually he became assured that it would never recur. Once more in a normal mood, he devoted himself to his studies, his books, and his ramblings. A great walker and an agile climber, he sought out lonely spots which gave him the sense of detachment one feels on top of a mountain.

Occasionally he reverted to his accident. "Was I dreaming? Is it possible that such an absurd and mystifying thing ever happened to me?"

If he was alone he shivered a little. However he asked himself the question less and less. One evening when he was glancing through the history of witchcraft again, he told himself, "In a little while I will have forgotten it."

He began to read, but he felt such unrest that he finally laid down the book. He was angry with himself, he almost hated himself.

"There are certainly moments when we seem to be our own enemies," he grumbled.

He was alone in the room. Cecile was giving orders to the cook. The windows were open, as they always were in summer. One could see the meadow and the garden, the beeches and the willows; one could hear the melody of the brook. The new moon was roving among the stars. By fits and starts the odor of new-mown hay was wafted in like perfume.

"It is good to be alive! It *must* be good to be alive!" Maldar told himself.

After he had spoken, his ill-ease seemed to vanish. He went over to one of the windows. Through the trees he could see a bit of the Milky Way, and he thought of the thrill it had given him at twenty. Night-flies were grazing his cheek, an animal with a long body like a snake went past—a weasel or an otter; a dog was baying at that immortal enemy whom dogs see at night, and other dogs took up the howl.

"To sleep, star-gazing under the sky,
Dreaming, to hear the friendly bells,
Their solemn hymns borne on the wind . . ."

quoted Frederick.

He picked up a thick book, "The Illustrious Dr. Maltheus." The evening passed quickly and pleasantly.

Nevertheless when he went to his room he took care to unhook an automatic pistol and a hunting-knife from the panoply on the wall. These he hid in the drawer of his night table, and went to sleep.

A bad dream awakened him. He felt his heart beating rapidly. A cold sweat covered his chest and neck. A vague fear haunted him. He looked expectantly toward the window where a flood of silver moonlight was streaming in. He heard a slight rustling, and turning, he saw, near the porcelain stove and facing the panoply—a pale form.

"Who's there?" he cried in a harsh, trembling voice.

His heartbeats were becoming unendurable. Although his hand shook like a leaf, he succeeded in opening the drawer of the night table, and seizing his automatic. At this moment the mysterious being—the same one, he was certain, as on the other occasion—stretched out its hand to draw a weapon. . . .

"Blackguard!" muttered Maldar.

For a second the two regarded each other. Then two shots went off simultaneously. One ball entered the wall above the wardrobe. The unknown visitor advanced a step, turned, fell, and rolled over on the floor. . . .

Maldar turned the switch,—there was no light. A terrific weakness overcame him and he thought he was going to faint; but he controlled himself, found a box of matches and a candle, which added but a slender flame to the moonlight. Maldar wondered if he had the courage to get up. He glanced toward the spot where the body ought to be, but it was hidden by the footboard of the bed.

Cautiously he stood up, the pistol in his right hand, the candle in his left. He went forward, but before he had passed the bed, he came upon the form. He started back, dropped the candle, uttered a sharp cry, and then stood as if paralysed.

The man stretched out there, clad only in his shirt, was, with the exception of a ghastly pallor, the exact image of Frederick!

A minute passed before Maldar dared to move. He

leaned on the bed in terror, his teeth clattering, his eyes wild and staring. For a long time he perceived nothing but the darkness, then the body appeared again, with its white, fantastic face, its dead hand, still clutching the revolver it had taken down from the panoply.

His terror and his fear slowly abated—and Maldar heard himself asking: "But where did it come from? Why did it attack me?"

He took two steps forward and stopped. He saw a small red gash in the man's forehead. So it was there that he had been hit.

This corpse was flatter, emptier, more mocking and more terrible than any body that Maldar had ever seen. The eyes were closed, the arms hanging from the long torso were stiffening, and the lips were parted feebly over transparent teeth. . . .

Just then someone knocked at the door.

Maldar unlocked it, and saw his sister, who had hastily slipped on a dressing-gown.

"What has happened?" she demanded, "I woke up with a start—I seem to have heard pistol shots——"

"It was I who fired them," said Maldar, quietly, "I—and he!"

"He—who?" she exclaimed, frightened.

"The—man who attacked me before."

Her eyes dilated with bewilderment and fear, but she went into the room and came suddenly upon the body. . . .

Her hands began to tremble, and she shook so violently that he put his arm about her to steady her. Then in a dreamy voice,

"You have killed him?" she asked.

"What could I do—he fired the first——"

"It is frightful!—And then—he looks like you——"

"Doesn't he," breathed Maldar. "And still the same mystery. How did he get in? Both doors were locked. It is impossible that he broke the grilling on the window. I was at his mercy—it was lucky that I woke up and saw him—He took this revolver from the panoply, the very same moment that I picked up my automatic—and so—he is dead!"

They stood a moment in silence, horror-stricken and tragic.

"It's nearly morning," said Cecile, finally; "we must notify the police."

As she turned she saw the cook and the chambermaid standing in the doorway. The former was already old, the other young, with an immense head, a bovine face, and huge, ungainly hands.

"We heard something," said the old woman, her beady eyes full of stupid but stubborn curiosity, "so we came."

When they saw the body they shrieked horribly, fear mingled with the joy of being in a scandal. When they calmed down and their surprise diminished they remembered the first drama over which they had gossiped with their neighbors and the tradesmen.

"The same man," whispered the old woman. "Shall we call Legouvent and his son—it is almost time for them to be up?"

Maldar nodded. A quarter of an hour later, the father Legouvent, the son, the grandmother, and two daughters came running to view the corpse.

The son promised to go to the mayor, the younger daughter to the police.

"We ought to send for the doctor," said Cecile.

Frederick and Cecile closed the door of the unhappy room, and waited anxiously, sadly, in the misty dawn. Joy was in the air, the grass was stirring, fluttering wings presaged happiness.

The doctor arrived first; his eyes set, his face half-buried in his beard.

"The same occurrence?" he cried. He looked narrowly at Cecile and Frederick standing there bewildered, nervous and pale.

"The same, only worse!" sighed Maldar, "I have killed him!"

"Killed him, the devil!" said the doctor, interested at once. "Self-defence, I presume?"

"I had no alternative but to kill or be killed," answered Maldar.

The doctor was curious.

"Do you understand it better?"

"Not in the least—I was surprised as I was the other time—He was there in my room, inexplicably—both doors locked and bolted . . ."

"We'll find out just the same—with the assistance of these gentlemen——"

He turned, ironically, to two newcomers, two policemen, half-awake and very sulky.

One of them, a lieutenant, grumbled:

"I guess we came here for something——"

"Do you want to see it?"

They followed Maldar, the doctor came after. The lieutenant made a pretence of examining the room, then bent down over the body.

"This is peculiar. How did it happen?"

To the doctor more than to the policemen, Maldar told the story.

"He could not have come through the doors, or the windows," agreed the lieutenant, who was searching the bureau drawers, one by one. "Perhaps, you made a mistake—and forgot to lock something."

"I don't believe so."

"It isn't a ghost," jeered the other feebly, "because there it is!"

"Perhaps it is a ghost, all the same," said the doctor. . . .

He approached the body and put out his hand to touch it.

"Don't disturb it," yelled the lieutenant.

"Don't be alarmed, lieutenant, as he lies there—he will remain—but look——"

He seized the arm of the dead man, lifted it, uttered a cry, and let it fall. . . .

Then he turned away, pale.

"It is not a man," he said.

The policemen would have met this statement with derision coming from anyone but the doctor. But they knew the old man, through many an accident and many a crime.

"Then what is it?" inquired the lieutenant.

"I don't know—not yet—I have no right to make any assumptions—But wait, we'll make a test. Lieutenant, lift

the head a little. You will see that the body has almost no weight . . ."

The other policeman watched with his eyes popping out, while a look of astonishment came over Maldar's face.

"Look here, doctor—you ain't kidding us?"

"Try it. Try it," the doctor commanded.

It had been a long while since a corpse had frightened the lieutenant any more than it might frighten an interne at the hospital. He had seen so many.

Nevertheless, he approached this one with a shudder which became violent when he had lifted the head and let it fall. . . .

"Peculiar," he muttered. "Astonishing! I notice also—Compare its face with that of Mr.——"

A shudder passed over the crowd.

The room was closed; one of the policemen stood in front of the house, while the mayor, the doctor and Maldar gathered in the library.

The mayor, a red-haired man who looked positively prehistoric, declared:

"The 'Beyond' exists!"

"What do you mean?" asked the doctor. "Evidently there are many things in this world which we cannot understand —and many more which we do not even see—but, granted that, what is the 'Beyond'?"

"Simply the other world," answered the mayor. "This being cannot be a man, it is another kind of living thing—which men call a specter or a ghost——"

"That is exactly what we do not know," answered the doctor. "This being may perhaps belong to our world."

"You mean that the 'Beyond' is here?"

"I think it should be, in any case—but if I dare express my entire opinion, it is neither from an earthly 'Beyond' or a heavenly 'Beyond,' from which this spirit comes——"

"Then where does it come from?"

The doctor did not answer. He was looking straight before him. For a minute he seemed hypnotized. Then he said in a low voice:

"There are many ways of conceiving the occult world,—unquestionably this world is many-sided. I neither deny

nor affirm what you call the 'Beyond,' but I am almost certain that the being upstairs comes from *here*—from very near-by."

"I don't understand——"

"You noticed its strange resemblance to Mr. Maldar?"

Maldar was trembling violently. He was pale and very tired, and he felt a sense of great loss and a strange grief within him.

"Everybody noticed it," said the mayor.

"Very well," continued the doctor, in a lower voice than before, as if frightened by his own words, "the being up there is an emanation of our host. It is his double. The struggle during the night was the struggle of a man with himself. And the man did not die——"

The three men looked at each other. To all three the proof seemed apparent.

"It is unbelievable," murmured the mayor at last.

"Isn't everything that happens unbelievable?"

"I begin to understand," said Maldar in the voice of a dreamer, "this great dissatisfaction I felt with myself, which became hateful to me at times—that was my struggle—with him."

"But aren't doubles immortal?" sighed the mayor.

"Haven't we proof there to the contrary?" answered the doctor. "I believe now that these manifestations of our double are also endowed with life and personality. Nearly always this personality is confused with ours, but we have just proved that it can be separate, so much so as to become a violent enemy. I wonder if many deeds which are done against our evident self-interest cannot be attributed to this, —even certain suicides."

Maldar recalled those nights when he had despised himself so utterly, when it seemed that one part of him was so ferociously opposed to the other. He felt a deep regret, as if he had lost some one very dear to him.

"Shall I be able to live without him?" he groaned, "or at any rate won't I notice his loss?"

"I have a feeling," the doctor answered quietly, "that another double will be born in you to take the place of this one who is dead."